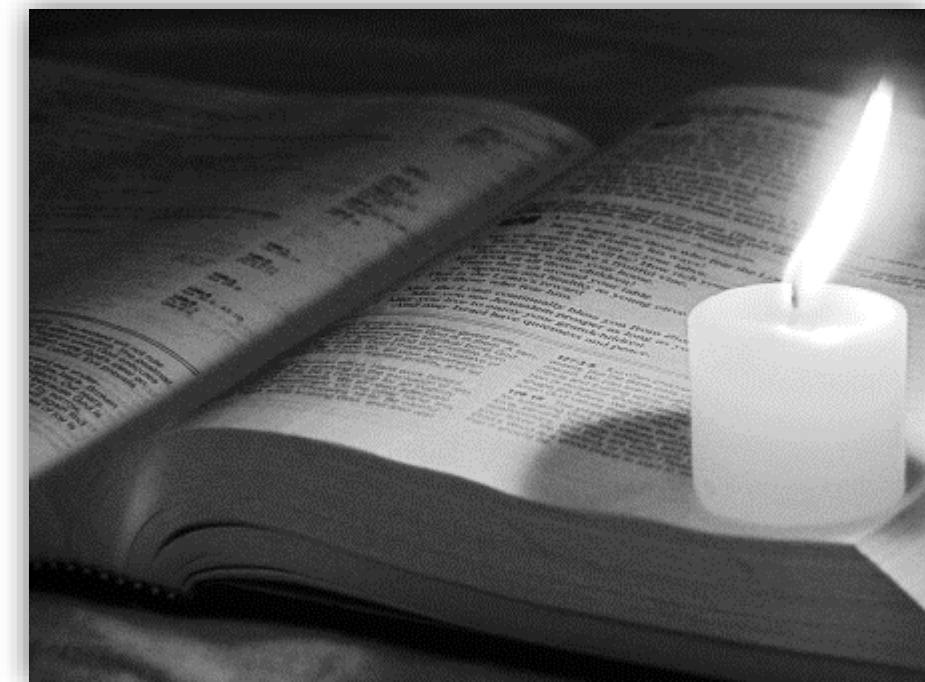


BIBLE SURVEY COURSE

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

The New Testament - 201



School of Global Missions
Dr. Frederick Osborn, M.Div., D.Min.

Bible Survey Course Syllabus
The New Testament - 201

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederick Osborn traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God from 2005 - 2017. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students around the world.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other independent ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA.

He and his wife, Deena now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to write, teach, and publish his books and study guides.

Portions of this BIBLICAL STUDIES course are taken from the following books by this author:

Exploring the New Testament

Exploring the Old Testament: Vol. One – The Pentateuch

From Genesis to Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation Through the Old Testament Scriptures

Judges: A 21st Century Prophetic Commentary

The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Jesus Christ

The Way, the Truth, and the Life: The Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah

This Gospel of The Kingdom

School of Global Missions

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES: NT 201

COURSE SYLLABUS - PROFESSOR

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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course in BIBLICAL STUDIES is designed to teach and train three groups: (1) those who are preparing to go to unreached people groups in foreign mission fields (2) for indigenous workers who need more teaching and training for the work they are doing, and (3) to provide materials for indigenous church planters to teach and train others for evangelism and church planting.

CREDIT VALUE:

SGM uses what is known as a *Trimester Calendar* for holding classes. In a trimester system, students have three terms of 12 weeks in each school year. The students will cover a full year's worth of teaching in a normal two semester year. This course in BIBLICAL STUDIES has a 30 credit hour value (Three Terms in Old Testament Studies and Three Terms in New Testament Studies).

COURSE TEXT:

The only required text for all Biblical Studies Courses is THE HOLY BIBLE. We recommend that each student has a good Study Bible, if possible.

NOTE TO STUDENTS: SGM recommends the website, www.blueletterbible.org for Bible translations and reference materials for Bible study. The site is also available on Mobile apps for your phone or tablet.

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Additional material is included at the end of the teaching materials. You may or may not wish to take advantage of the Handouts. Anything that is identified as HANDOUT material is NOT seen by the students unless you copy and give to them as supplemental material. It will be up to the individual teacher to review the teaching materials and decide what to emphasize in their class time. Whatever is not covered in the class, the students will be able study as homework assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STUDENTS:**1. Read the required texts.**

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Because the Bible is the only required text for all BIBLICAL STUDIES classes, the students should read the relevant chapters from the Scriptures. The chapters and verses covered in each class will be listed at the beginning of each lesson.

- 2. Attend all classes in person, Online, or review recording of an excused class (maximum two per term).**
- 3. At the end of each term (12 weeks) write a term paper of at least three typewritten pages (12 point, Times New Roman font, single space.)**

NOTE: Portions of the materials for the School of Global Mission's BIBLICAL STUDIES, NT 201: THE GOSPELS AND ACTS are taken from *Exploring the New Testament* © 2010, 2015 and *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* © 2017 by Dr. Frederick Osborn.

These special Teaching Notes are intended for the teachers only; they are in Times New Roman #14 for ease of reading while teaching. A separate set of notes for the students has been produced and are intended for the student to read and follow as you use the Teaching Notes.

Because this course uses the Inductive Method of Bible Study (see HANDOUT), you will notice a number of places where words, phrases, or sentences are in **bold print and underlined** these are intended for the students as fill-in-the-blank answers in their Student Notes as they follow your lesson.

For some lessons, there may be more material for the teacher than can be taught in a one-hour class time. So, it is best to review each lesson before you start teaching and refer to the student notes for reading and homework assignments. Any additional materials in the *Teacher's Notes* allow the teacher some flexibility in how they teach this course.

**SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR N.T. COURSE WRITTEN BY
REV. DR. FREDERICK OSBORN:**

(NOTE: These books are not required-reading. They are listed for your benefit as additional sources for your Term Paper, as well as for your personal edification and growth. Portions of these books are included in the teacher's curriculum)

DISCIPLE-TO-DISCIPLE: Making Disciples Like Jesus
EXPLORING THE NEW TESTAMENT
FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION: Interpreting the Book of Revelation
Through the Old Testament Scriptures
KINGDOM DISCIPLESHIP: Becoming Like Jesus
THE APOCALYPTIC VISION: Understanding The Apocalyptic Writings of The Bible
THE BOOK OF ACTS: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: Speaking Truth to Power
THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOU: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power In You
KEYS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER
MESSIAH: The Mission of Jesus of Nazareth
THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King
THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: The Teachings and Ministry Of Jesus The Messiah
THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

BIBLICAL STUDIES COURSE: NEW TESTAMENT 201 – 203**NT 201 The Gospels and Acts**

1. Introduction to the New Testament
2. Matthew pt. one: “King of the Jews” – The Background to the New Testament
3. Matthew pt. two: “Jesus, the Spokesman to Distortion”
4. Matthew pt. three: “The Parables of Jesus”
5. Mark pt. one: “Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, and Savior”
6. Mark pt. two: Jesus, the Son of Man”
7. Luke pt. one: “The Messianic Hope”
8. Luke pt. two: “Jesus the Teacher”
9. John pt. one: “The Word Became Flesh”
10. John pt. two: “Jesus, Lord and Savior”
11. The Gospels: “From the Tomb to the Throne”
12. The Book of Acts - Overview

NT 202 The Letters of Paul the Apostle

1. Romans
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Philippians
7. Colossians
8. 1 Thessalonians
9. 2 Thessalonians
10. 1 Timothy
11. 2 Timothy
12. Titus and Philemon

NT 203 THE LATER NEW TESTAMENT

1. Hebrews pt. one
2. Hebrews pt. two
3. James
4. 1 Peter
5. 2 Peter
6. 1, 2, 3 John
7. Jude
8. Revelation pt. one
9. Revelation pt. two
10. Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature
11. The Mission of the Church in the New Testament
12. Early Church History: The First Seven Ecumenical Councils

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES
NT 201: THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

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NOTE: ALL HANDOUTS FOR THIS COURSE ARE IN A SEPARATE FILE AT THE END OF THESE LESSONS. HANDOUTS ARE NOT INCLUDED WITH THE STUDENT NOTES. THE HANDOUTS MAY BE COPIED FOR THE STUDENTS AT THE TEACHER’S DISCRETION.

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 201-1 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

How to Study the New Testament

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. Why Study the New Testament?
- II. How To Study the New Testament
 - A. The EIGHT RULES for interpreting Bible texts
- III. Inspiration: How the New Testament was written

Why study the New Testament?

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (From the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-17)

Bible study is not just for pastors, teachers, and those in full time ministry. EVERY Christian should know the New Testament because it is:

- God’s **instruction manual** for how to live the Christian life (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- The New Testament discloses **the mind of Jesus Christ** and reveals His **character and will** (1 Cor. 2:16; Col. 3:16)
- The Holy Spirit speaks to us through His written word (John 15:26-27; 16:12-15)

God said through His Prophet, Hosea, *“My people are perishing for lack of knowledge.”* (Hosea 4:6); and without a strong foundation in the Word of God, Christians will be open to false teachings, or will backslide, not knowing what the will of God for their lives is. So it is the responsibility of spiritual leaders to build a **sound knowledge base** of the bible in the local church so believers’ faith in God will not fail. At the same time, it is the responsibility of every Christian to **diligently study their Bible** so they will be strengthened and confident in their faith, based on their knowledge of God’s Word and not just emotions or personal experience.

This New Testament Survey Course will strengthen those who complete it because they will gain confidence in their Christian faith based on the knowledge of God’s Word.

It is the responsibility of all Christians to take seriously the complexity and the holiness of the Scriptures – to study them and apply them to their hearts, daily living the Word of God, not merely reading it and talking about it. Studying the Scriptures as part of a survey course follows the biblical pattern that the Word of God should be studied and understood in detail so the word of the LORD to them will be known, precept upon precept, and every verse will be understood in context of the chapter, book, and entire Bible (Isaiah 28:10).

The School of Global Missions New Testament Survey Course will equip pastors, teachers, evangelists, and laymen to know and to teach the Word of God with confidence and accuracy so they will *do their best to present themselves to God and others as* “one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Because the New Testament was given to us by inspiration from God, it is able to teach us what is true and false; it makes us realize what is wrong in our lives. The Word of God straightens our walk with God and helps us to stay on the right path with the Holy Spirit as our guide and counselor. It is God’s way of making us well prepared to face the trials and temptations of this life; it fully equips us to do what is right and to do good to everyone. (2 Timothy 3:16).

Before anyone begins this kind of intensive study of the Bible, the teacher should encourage their students to ask themselves if they are truly ready to commit to the study of God’s word and complete it (Luke 14:28-30). The teacher should begin by asking their students to prayerfully search their hearts and ask, “What is my motivation for studying the Bible?” Students who are properly motivated will ask, “Is the Lord well pleased?” If their heart is right, they will ask, “Is my work well done?” If their motives are pure, they will ask, “Is His word being used well?”

If the motivation of a student’s heart is not right, they still may be able to finish this New Testament Survey Course, but there will be no spiritual benefit for them in the end.

How to Study the Bible

The Bible is a spiritual book and cannot be understood without the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit (you must be born again to truly know and understand the Scriptures). Therefore, a person’s spiritual condition greatly affects their understanding of scripture. When you sit down to study, begin with prayer. Pray for:

- The Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth
- Self-discipline to make time to study
- Productive and fruitful study time
- Economy of study time
- Open ears to hear the Word of God
- Open eyes to perceive the Word of God
- An open mind to understand the scripture
- A heart prepared to receive the truth
- The faith and the desire (will) to live the Word

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” John 16:13

Obstacles to Understanding God’s Word

The Bible is not like any other religious book ever written. Not everyone who studies it is able to understand it. Other religious books claim special revelations, and may contain high or lofty spiritual ideas, and concepts. Some religions promote aesthetic practices that require the novice to spend years of learning and training under one or more teachers who have mastered them. However, the Bible is truly a book that is written for everyman and little or no special training is required to understand the content of the book.

That does not mean that just anyone who picks up a Bible and starts reading it can understand the spiritual truths revealed in its pages. There are obstacles that can put roadblocks to understanding in the hearts of those who study the Bible, but the things that hinder the student have less to do with the intellect or spiritual disciplines than with the condition of the heart of the person seeking revelation from the written Word.

The New Testament is not like any other religious text in that it engages and inspires the human soul (mind/will/emotions) to follow Jesus Christ. Because it is from the Holy Spirit, it is unlike any other religious text in the way it engages and inspires the regenerated spirit of the student to know and be like Jesus Christ in word and deed. Therefore, if the student is not born again, they do not have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within them. And without the divine *Paraclete* (From the Greek *Parakletos* advocate, or *parakalein* to summon as a helper) to guide them into whole truth, most - if not all - of the spiritual significance of the holy Scriptures will be lost to them.

A second obstacle to understanding the Bible is having unconfessed sin or living in disobedience to the word of God while attempting to study it. Jesus warned those who listened to His teachings that “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.” (John 12:48)

It is essential to have faith in God and to believe that the words of the Bible are not just the opinions of men to be followed any way the reader wants. The foundation of any Bible study must be the recognition that it is revelation from the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. The believer studies the Bible so they may put faith into action by actually doing what the Bible says we ought to be doing. James said that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-26), and a dead faith is incapable of understanding what the Bible is truly saying about living by faith.

The word of God can have two opposite effects upon the heart, depending upon the spiritual condition of its owner. When Pharaoh heard the Word of God from Moses and Aaron, he refused to obey and let God’s people go in peace. His disobedience hardened his heart, and each time the Word of God was spoken to him, his heart became harder. The writer of Hebrews admonished Christians not to harden their hearts by quoting from Psalms, “As has just been said: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.’” (Hebrews 3:15).

Those who teach God’s Word should encourage their students to study the Bible with a humble heart and with a sincere desire to repent and turn from their wicked ways. When properly motivated, those who study the Bible will discover that their hearts will be softened and broken by the word of God. To these people, the word of God speaks:

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19-20)

Throughout the Bible there is an expectation that once the Word of God is received, the believer must live by that Word:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.” Psalm 119:105-106

Genuine Christians are those who are not only hearers of the Word but are also doers of the Word. James warned those who read his words to prove themselves doers of the word, and “not merely hears who delude themselves” (James 1:22). He goes on to describe those who receive the word of God, but do not live by it as being like the man who looks at himself in the mirror;

“...and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:24-25

Those who read their Bible over and over again; who go to church Sunday after Sunday and hear the preacher’s sermon, but never put into practice what they have heard, eventually will become insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, confirming what Jesus said would happen to them:

“And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:
 ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
 And seeing you will see and not perceive;
 For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
 Their ears are hard of hearing,
 And their eyes they have closed,
 Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
 Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’” Matthew 13:14-15 (NKJV)

Pastors, teachers, elders and church leaders are responsible to model the behavior they preach about every Sunday. Not only that, but they are responsible to see to it that those under their care also put into practice what they have heard. Sermons and Bible studies should not only be informational, but they must also be transformational. Transformation comes when the believer begins to put into practice what they have learned; if not, they will lose the ability to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to them through His Word.

How To Interpret the New Testament?

If the Bible student is going to avoid the mistakes and pitfalls of totally misunderstanding or misinterpreting the New Testament’s verses, they must follow the basic rules of Bible interpretation that have been universally recognized down through the centuries by orthodox Christian theologians. The method of interpreting ancient texts that should be applied when interpreting the Bible is called *Hermeneutics*. Simply stated, *Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting*

ancient texts. It is the branch of theology that is concerned with how to accurately and objectively explain or interpret religious concepts, theories and principles found in the Bible.

One of the first challenges the serious Bible student faces is when they discover different commentaries that do not completely agree upon the meaning of a particular passage they are studying. How do you know which one is the most accurate interpretation? Not all Bible interpreters agree on the meaning of every Bible passage. However, most acknowledge certain guidelines exist that will help determine the true meaning of almost every passage; and if Bible students will follow those guidelines - and use commentaries and study helps by theologians that incorporate sound principles of Bible hermeneutics - they will eliminate most, if not all, major arguments over what the Bible really says.

Here are the EIGHT RULES of interpreting texts developed by specialists in the field of the “science of meaning” over the past 2500 years - from Socrates to the present day:

1. **Rule of Definition** – Words have meaning; and the interpreter must begin with words. Stay with the intending meaning of the words. The interpreter must conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words.

The GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL METHOD of Bible interpretation seeks to find the basic “plain sense” meaning of a Bible passage. It seeks to determine what the text says grammatically and what it meant historically.

Determine the Type of Literature

What is the genre? History, prophecy, narrative, and poetry all require special consideration. Always take the truth of the Bible literally, but not always the words that are symbols for the truth. (Psalm 91:4; Isaiah 55:12; John 3:3)

2. **Rule of Usage** – “The whole Bible may be regarded as written for ‘the Jew first’ and its words and idioms ought to be rendered according to Hebrew usage.” R. B. Girdlestone

When studying the New Testament, it is essential to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was Jewish; His parents were Jews. Jesus lived and moved among the Jews of Palestine. His immediate audience was Jewish; so He spoke directly to them in words and thoughts that must have been intelligible

to them. If students of the New Testament are to fully understand the meaning of its verses, it is absolutely necessary they understand the Jewish historical and cultural contexts to the life and teachings of Jesus and His Apostles.

Christianity had hardly been born before it encountered its first major culture clash. Jesus and His Apostles never started out to create a new religion. “The Way” as it was first called (Acts 9:2), began as a sect within the Jewish religion. A simple reading of the Book of Acts will reveal that Paul and the other Apostles went to the Jews first, but welcomed any Gentiles that wanted to become followers of “The Way”. It was not long before the Gospel missionaries took their message to the ends of the Roman Empire and beyond. But in the West, the church flourished among the Gentiles who were immersed in the Greek worldview. The Apostles, who were all from Jewish backgrounds, faced a two-way crisis. One crisis was with the Jewish believers who wanted to keep belief in Jesus Christ confined within the context of Judaism; and the other crisis was with the Greek-Gentiles who were flooding into the church and had no desire to exchange their Pagan rituals and Greco-Roman cultural contexts of worship for Jewish ones. These crises reached a head very early on and were settled at the first Council of Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15.

The immediate results of the Council of Jerusalem led to the severing of relations between the Jews and Christians that has never been reconciled. After 70 A.D. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, and the Jews were scattered throughout the world in the great *Diaspora* (displacement). And from that time, Greek-Gentile Christians dominated the church. As time went on, and the New Testament Canon was settled, Christian theologians lost or buried the Jewish context of the New Testament Books. For many, the relevance of the Hebrew Scriptures was only in context of Gentile Christian theology. For centuries in the West, Jesus’ Jewish character was denied and by the time of the Renaissance, Jesus and the Apostles were portrayed more like fair-skinned, blue-eyed Greeks or Romans than racially Semites.

As the Great Reformation of the church swept across Europe and the Americas, Protestant theologians were no less interested in the Jewish context of their faith than were the Roman Catholics. Still Christianity was seen as totally separate from the religion of the “Christ killing” Jews. Hostility towards the Jews and strong anti-Semitism in Europe kept the Jewish roots of Christianity suppressed until modern scholars began their historical quests to discover the real Jesus of Nazareth. The positive results of these modern quests to discover the historical Jesus have been to bring to

life the world into which Jesus was born and lived. At the same time, contemporary Bible scholars have discovered a treasure trove of theological insights into both Testaments that have enriched our understanding of the Bible. Modern discoveries have led to the collapse of many favorite interpretations of the Bible passages that systematically ignored the Jewish context of the New Testament.

The modern theologians and Bible commentators who continue to ignore the Jewish contexts of the Scriptures are often frustrated in their attempts to understand them, leading them to stretch and bend their interpretations of certain texts in order to make sense of them from a purely Western or Gentile worldview.

The Greek model of learning and understanding relies upon:

- Words and their denotations
- Explanations
- Lists
- Emphasis is upon telling the story in a systematic way
- Appeals to the ear (hearing) – for example, God is described as all-powerful, loving, all-knowing, etc.
- Greek thought emphasizes the individual
- Tries to explain the mysterious in scientific terms: “everything has a reason and there is a reason for everything”
- Is most concerned with the “how” of things than the “why”

However, the Hebrew way of thinking dominates the entire Bible. And to fully understand the immediate and over-arching theology of the Bible, it is most helpful to use the Hebrew model of learning and understanding the Bible. The New Testament was written by men who used the Jewish methods of learning:

- Pictures and Metaphors
- Connotations of names, places, and structures
- Emphasis is on concepts instead of telling coherent stories.
- Appeals to “eye speech” (for example, God is described as a Shepherd, a Rock, Living Water, etc.)
- Jewish thinking emphasizes the corporate mindset: what effects the individual effects the whole community.
- Jewish thought is comfortable with the mysterious and does not seek an explanation for everything.

- Jewish thought is more concerned with the “why” of things than the “how” of things.
3. **Rule of Context** – Every word, verse, or passage of Scripture must be understood in the light of what came before and after it. EXEGESIS is another of those big, fat, Greek words that scare the novice Bible student. It simply means “to lead or guide out”, or in other words, let the author’s original intention and meaning guide you to discover the meaning of the text. When studying any passage of Scripture, the Bible exegete asks the question, “What was the author’s original intention and meaning?” To find the answer requires understanding the passage or verse in the proper **context**:
- **Immediate** context is in relationship to the other words in the paragraph and within context of other verses in the book being studied.
 - **Remote** context is in relation to the other similar passages from other books in the Bible as well as the overall context of the entire Bible.
4. **Rule of Historical background** – Theological interpretation and historical investigation can never be separated from each other. In other words: an important key to understanding the Bible is to understand what was happening in the world around the places and people in the passage being studied. That includes understanding the people who lived in those times and who wrote the Bible. For examples:
- The more we understand about the religion of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, the more we will understand the significance of the Plagues that the God of Israel brought upon Egypt. Each of these plagues was in essence, a judgment of God upon the gods of Egypt. Also, when we understand that the Pharaoh was worshipped as the Egyptian god incarnate, we can understand the significance of Moses’ confrontations with Pharaoh.
 - The more we understand about the Canaanites and their immoral religious practices, which included burning alive children sacrificed to their god and ritual prostitution – both male and female – then the more we understand God’s wrath against the Canaanites, and why they posed such a threat to the religious purity of the Children of Israel if they were not driven out.

- The more we understand about the period between the testaments, and the more we understand about the Greek and Roman cultures, the more we will understand about the people, places, and things mentioned in the New Testament.
5. **Rule of Logic** – Interpretation of Scripture is merely logical reasoning. Charles G. Finney (1792 – 1875) is widely considered to be one of the greatest theologians and the most successful Gospel preacher of his time. He said he interpreted a Bible passage as he “would have understood the same or like passage in a law book.” Using the law of logic and evidence, the interpreter of the Bible can weed out many of the false theological speculations and gross misrepresentations of Bible passages.
6. **Rule of Precedent** – A precedent is something said or done before that serves as an example for how something is said or done now. In Christian theology, the Rule of Precedent can be stated in the principle, “Let Scripture interpret Scripture.” Instead of looking to non-biblical sources or the opinions of men to clarify a difficult verse or passage of Scripture, first find other biblical texts that relate to and clarify that difficult passage. And then interpret the difficult passage in light of a clearer one.
- For example: Jesus called Himself “the Good Shepherd”; by looking up other Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments and seeing how the images of “shepherd” and “sheep” were used by the writers of the Bible, we get a better understanding of what Jesus meant by that statement.
7. **The Rule of Unity** – It is fundamental to a faithful interpretation of the Scripture, that the parts of the Bible are to be analyzed with reference to the significance of the whole. Although the books of the Bible are not arranged in a chronological order, it is important to remember that the Bible tells a complete story from Genesis to Revelation, and that each book of the Bible has its part in telling that story.
8. **The Rule of Inference** - an inference is a fact, reasonably implied from another fact. It is a process of reasoning whereby a conclusion can be drawn from competent and satisfactory evidence. For example, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, and Jesus’ own resurrection refute those who say there is no resurrection from the dead (note: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

These rules can help the Bible student discover the **original intended meaning** of the Scriptures and their **proper application** to the lives of believers today. If we understand the Bible correctly, both the Old and the New Testaments will be relevant to Christians. The Bible speaks to the Jews through the Hebrew Scriptures (what Christians call the Old Testament). The Hebrew Scriptures have spoken to Christians from the time the church was founded – even after the New Testament Canon was formed, they continue to speak to Christians. (see HANDOUTS “Canon: What is the Bible?” and “Formation of the Christian Canon”).

Although this is a course in the New Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures cannot be ignored in this study. The Hebrew Scriptures, properly understood, can be a key to help us unlock the full meaning of much of the New Testament. (See HANDOUT “Inspiration: How the New Testament Was Written”).

The whole Bible is a relevant document and speaks to Christians today as much as it did to believers of earlier times. Its pages reveal to us the very heart and mind of God to His creation:

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” Deut. 29:29

These rules of interpretation have been given so we can have confidence in our understanding of the Scriptures when we apply these sound rules of interpreting the Bible. The Bible student can avoid the pitfalls of trying to figure out what the Bible means by trusting in their own interpretive methods or the opinions of those who do not share our faith in God’s Word. As you go through this New Testament Survey, as much as possible, let the Bible speak for itself, and use these rules of interpretation and your God-given reason, guided by the Holy Spirit; if you do that, you cannot go wrong.

How do Christians know the Bible is truly the authoritative, error-free word of truth from God to us? (See HANDOUT “What is Biblical Inerrancy?”).

1. The Bible says it is God’s authoritative Word of truth to us.
2. The historical church says it is: Irenaeus, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley – to name a few.
3. Jesus says it is (Luke 24:27, 44-48)
4. The contemporary evangelical church says it is. Here is a statement signed by several hundred evangelical leaders at the October 1978 meeting of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago:

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“Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives.”

As you prepare to study this New Testament Survey – and the entire Bible for the rest of your life - you can be confident in the following:

- The Bible is totally without error and free from all contradiction.
- The Bible is complete and accurate.
- The Bible is Holy Scripture and the Word of God.
- Every doctrine of the Bible carries with it the full authority of God.
- Every prophecy of the Bible will be fulfilled according to God’s timing.
- The commands of the Bible are the directives of God Himself and therefore demand willing obedience.
- The Bible contains everything that the Christian needs to know in order to obtain salvation and live a Christian life.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON ONE

1. Explain why it is important to be born again to understand the Bible.
2. What are the obstacles for believers to understand the Bible?
3. What is the purpose for the *Grammatical-Historical Method* of interpreting the Bible?
4. How do the eight rules for interpreting the Scriptures help the Bible student discover the original intended meaning of the Scriptures and their proper application to the lives of believers today?
5. Can Christians know the Bible is truly the authoritative, error-free word of truth from God? If so, then explain how.

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**SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES
NT 201-2
MATTHEW (Part One)
THE BACKGROUND TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

“In the Fullness of Time, God Sent Forth His Son”

The purpose of this lesson is to explain the time and place where Jesus lived in order to gain a deeper understanding why God sent His Son into the world at that particular time. This lesson will also examine Jesus’ ministry to the Jews described in Matthew’s Gospel.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (Matthew – Author)

Approximate Date Written: A.D. 60-65

Original and Primary Audiences: Jews, and all believers

Purpose: To prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Jews first and the eternal King and Savior of all nations.

Context: Matthew was the Jewish tax collector who was called by Jesus to become one of His disciples. This Gospel forms the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments because of its emphasis on the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecy. This Gospel is filled with messianic language that would have been immediately recognizable to a Jewish audience. Terms such as "Son of David" are used frequently, and the Old Testament is quoted 53 times with an additional 76 other references.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. ROME
 - A. When Jesus was born Rome ruled the Western world, including Palestine.
 1. “Pax Romana” was the term used to describe the peace Rome secured by its law and order.
 - B. Rome unified the Western world through its system of roads, its civil law, and its military might.

- II. GREECE – Although the empire of Alexander the Great was long gone and Greece was now a province in the Roman Empire, the Greek Worldview still dominated civilized culture throughout the West.
 - A. Humanistic Greek Philosophy and Religion dominated the arts and sciences.
 - B. Greek language was the universal and unifying language.
- III. JUDAISM – Jesus was born and raised a devout Jew.
 - A. The Hebrew religion was dominated by the Law of Moses
 - B. The expectation of the coming of a Messianic Kingdom in Matthew’s Gospel

“In the Fullness of Time, God Sent Forth His Son”

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” Galatians 4:4-5

In order to do a complete introduction to the New Testament, it would require a detailed Study of the period of history that some Bible scholars call the **“400 Silent Years”** – the period of time from the end of the Old Testament until the time Jesus was born. A serious study of the four centuries from the time the last Old Testament book was written until the coming of John the Baptist would have to include:

- Rise of the **Greek Empire** under Alexander the Great – 300 BC
- The effort of the Greeks to make all things Greek called **Hellenism**.
- **The Jewish Revolt** under Judas Maccabeus – 166 BC
- Rise of **the Roman Empire** from 215 BC (63 BC Rome conquers Palestine)
- **Judaism** at the time Jesus was born - including:
 - a. The Political & economic environment of 1st century Palestine
 - b. Sanhedrin, Pharisees, and Sadducees
 - c. Herod the Great, his building projects & family

Recommended reading: *Between The Testaments* by Charles F Pfeiffer, Truth Publications, Inc, © 1959

However, for the purposes of this lesson, we can only examine in the broadest terms, the impact these historical events had upon the world at the time Jesus was born. Although every Gospel account shares the same background for

Jesus' earthly ministry, the writer of each Gospel emphasizes the different ways Jesus ministered to the Jews, Romans, and Greeks (Herodians). Each of these groups represented a particular *worldview* that shaped the time and place that Jesus was born and lived during His earthly ministry.

A *worldview* is: the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; it is the set of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group. A worldview is more than a way of looking at the world:

- A worldview **Explains** and shapes our values and standards.
- A worldview **Defines** how we see people, places, and things.
- A worldview **Determines** our behavior – how we respond to the people, places, and things all around us.

The Gospels describe how Jesus responded to each of these worldviews in His teachings and by His actions. So the more we understand these worldviews, the more we will understand the background of Matthew's Gospel. Before we examine how Jesus responded to these worldviews, let us take a closer look at each one.

The Roman Worldview. At the time Jesus was born, Rome ruled the Western civilized world. The Romans saw themselves as conquerors who believed that temporal, earthly power is supreme. To the Romans, the capitol city of Rome was the center of the world. In fact the Romans built an advanced system of roads that connected their Empire and made travel and trade easy, but most importantly, it allowed the Roman Legions to quickly travel throughout the Empire and enforce Rome's will. It was said at the time that "All roads lead to Rome."

Rome's power was established by its military prowess. So the Roman worldview was based upon the idea that "might makes right." Civil law and social order were of primary importance to the Romans. A person could live how they wanted, worship whatever gods they chose, or live where they wanted as long as they did not upset the social order or break the peace of Rome (*Pax Romana*).

For the Romans, the politician, soldier, statesman, diplomat, were held in highest esteem and were of most value. At the time Jesus lived, Caesar wielded supreme power over the Empire; his word was law and no one dared challenged his authority. Romans believed that all power came from above and since there was no one on the earth above Caesar, he was worshiped throughout the Empire as a god.

The Roman occupiers of Palestine were unconcerned with internal Jewish religious disputes as long as those conflicts did not spill over and challenge Roman law and order in the region.

The Greek (or Hellenistic) Worldview. Although Rome ruled the world politically and militarily, Greek culture ruled the world intellectually. For the Hellenists in the time of Jesus, Athens was the center of their world. Athens was the place where philosophy and the systematic study of human knowledge began. In the time of Alexander the Great, the Greeks began to spread their culture around the world. When Alexander conquered a people, he brought teachers to establish schools and teach the people "all things Greek" (Hellenism).

The Greek language was the primary means they used to promote and spread their culture. All educated people in Alexander's Empire were taught in Greek. Greek philosophy was based upon the idea that human reason was supreme. Artists, Scientists, philosophers, intellectuals, and teachers were the most valued people to the Greeks because they were the ones who defined and transmitted their culture around the world.

The Greek worldview is grounded in Humanism. Simply defined, humanism says, "Man is the measure of all things" because man determines what is and is not true. The Greeks believed that human knowledge is the answer to every need. The Herodians represented the Hellenistic worldview in Jesus' day because they were neither Romans nor Jews but were educated by and heavily influenced by Greek teachers, writers, philosophers, and artists.

King Herod and the Herodian ruling class were kept in power by Rome. Their wealth came from extracting taxes from the people for Rome and for themselves. Because they were not Jews, they were not motivated to keep the Laws of Moses. They were willing to appease their Jewish subjects by respecting their traditions, but they would ruthlessly put down any threat to their authority.

The Judaic Worldview. By far, this was the most influential worldview of the people Jesus ministered to. For the Jews in the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the Center of their world; they believed that the Temple was the dwelling place of God on the earth. All eyes looked to Jerusalem because the Temple was there, and the Jews believed that The Temple was the only place to truly worship God.

All of the Jewish religion is based upon the Law of Moses. The Lord gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, and since that time the fate of the nation depended upon their obedience to the Law. When they obeyed the Law of Moses, the nation prospered, but when they rebelled and disobeyed, the nation suffered.

After their Exile and return from Babylon, Pharisaic laws were added to the Law of Moses, and they became the standard of righteousness for all Jews. Since

Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, it was subject to Roman authority, but the Herodians were allowed to administer the local government. The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees had become the ultimate religious power in Palestine and exercised great authority over the people as part of the religious ruling body called the Sanhedrin. Matthew and the other Gospel writers use many of their verses to describe the conflicts between Jesus and these religious leaders.

THE SANHEDRIN – By the time Jesus was born, the Sanhedrin had become the highest Jewish ruling body in Judea. The highest tribunal of 71 members met in Jerusalem. Since it was the supreme court of Jewish Law and Justice, when Jesus was arrested, He was brought before this court to be tried for religious sedition. The apostles and other leaders in Jerusalem (including Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul) were also brought before the Sanhedrin to defend themselves (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:55; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66; John 11:47; Acts 4:15; Acts 5:21ff; Acts 6:12ff; Acts 22:30; Acts 23:1ff; Acts 24:20). The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was composed of the high priest, elders, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. The acting high priest was always head and presided over the body.

During the period of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Sanhedrin's power and influence was at its greatest; although it lost its power to officially sentence someone to death to the Roman courts (John 18:31), the people feared the Sanhedrin because anyone could be tried before that body as a false prophet, idolater, or deceiver of the people, and if found guilty could be punished or excommunicated.

As the Pharisees grew in importance, they grew in power in the Sanhedrin. So in the time of Christ, the Sanhedrin was controlled by the Pharisaic faction. The direct authority of the Sanhedrin was restricted to Judea proper, and for that reason, it had no judicial authority over our Lord so long as He remained in Galilee, which was under the direct authority of Herod. However, the Sanhedrin had tremendous influence over all the Jews until it was abolished after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD).

Matthew's Gospel shows how the Scribes and Pharisees were spiritual watchdogs over the Jews and how they made sure no one stepped out of line. Jesus's strongest condemnation of these religious leaders is recorded in Matthew 23:13-35. (See HANDOUT "The Pharisees and Sadducees").

MAJOR CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN JESUS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE JEWS IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

3:7	John the Baptist (the Forerunner of the Messiah) calls the Pharisees and Sadducees a "Brood of Vipers."
5:20	Jesus tells the crowds that unless their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, "you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."
9:14	Jesus questioned over the Pharisees' practice of fasting
9:34	Pharisees accuse Jesus of using demonic power to cast out demons
12:14	The Pharisees' plot to kill Jesus revealed
12:24	Pharisees again accuse Jesus of using demonic power to cast out demons
15:1-20	Jesus confronts the Pharisees over their traditions and not keeping the Law of Moses. The disciples warn Jesus that the Pharisees were greatly offended by Jesus' words
16:5-12	Jesus warns His disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
19:3-9	The Pharisees question Jesus over the law of divorce
21:45-46	The chief priests and Pharisees upset by Jesus' parable of the Landowner and wanted Him arrested. "But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet." (v 46).
22:1-14	Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast offends the Pharisees
22:15-22	The Pharisees plot how they might cause Jesus to incriminate Himself with His words.
22:22-33	The Sadducees confront Jesus over the Resurrection.
22:34-40	The Pharisees question Jesus over the Law of Moses
22:41-46	Jesus questions the Pharisees over the Messiah (Christ)
23:1-12	Jesus exposes the Pharisees' hypocrisies
23:13-36	Jesus pronounces judgment (woes) upon the Pharisees
26:56-68	Jesus on trial, charged with blasphemy by High Priest Caiaphas and members of the Sanhedrin

Jesus Challenged All Other Worldviews

Jesus was born into the world at a time place when everyone around Him lived by one of these worldviews: the Romans' "might makes right", the Greeks'

humanism, or Jews' obsession with keeping religious traditions. One way or another, Jesus challenged each of these worldviews during His lifetime. And in the end, those who embraced one or the other of these three conflicting and competing worldviews came together to end His life at Calvary.

Jesus' Response to the Roman Worldview

Although Palestine was occupied territory when Jesus was born, the Gospels barely mention Rome's presence. Because Jesus rarely mentioned Rome or Caesar by name, and because Jesus stated clearly that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24), the Gospels include only those encounters with Gentiles when they came to Jesus for help. In the final hours before Jesus was crucified, the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate is reluctantly dragged into the Jewish religious leaders' dispute with Jesus.

When we study the Gospels, the presence of Roman rule can be seen everywhere but not directly. It is not until the Paul and the other missionaries move beyond the borders of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria that Roman authorities take a more direct hand in dealing with the followers of Jesus Christ.

Roman power was felt by everyone Jesus encountered along the way:

- Everyone had to pay their taxes to Rome.
- Caesar's image was on the money they used for daily transactions.
- Matthew was a tax collector, and therefore, was indirectly working for Rome.
- During His earthly ministry, Jesus had more than one encounter with minor Roman officials.
- Roman soldiers would have been in every important town and village where Jesus visited; they would have been watching Jesus and His disciples very closely because everywhere they went, crowds would gather.

Matthew's Gospel records two times that Jesus acknowledges Rome's presence:

- **Matthew 5:41** – In His Sermon on Mount, Jesus mentions a Roman law that allows any civilian to be pressed into service to carry a Roman soldier's baggage one mile.
- **Matthew 8:5-13** – Jesus praised the faith of a Centurion who recognized His spiritual power and authority.

Although the Pharisees tried to get Him to incriminate Himself by saying something seditious, nowhere does Jesus denounce Rome or say anything politically subversive against Rome. Jesus never called for military or political

action against Rome, which was particularly frustrating to the Jews who believed the Messiah would be a conquering king who would overthrow their Gentile oppressors. At one point the masses are ready to proclaim Him king, but Jesus would not allow it (John 6:15). And at the moment of His arrest, Jesus rebuked the disciple who took up his sword against those who came to take Jesus away (Matthew 26:52; John 18:11). Before He was led away to be crucified, Jesus made it clear to Pilate that He is a king, but that His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is not like Rome; it was established to bring people to the truth that makes them free, and not to subjugate others. Jesus also stated that Pilate had no power over Him except for what had been given to him from heaven (John 18:36-37; and 19:10-11). Without openly fighting against Rome, Jesus demonstrated by His supernatural power that He possessed a power and authority that was above and beyond the kingdoms of this world, including Caesar's. And by His resurrection, Jesus proved that He operated by a power and authority that was above and beyond anything Rome could comprehend or conquer.

Jesus' Response to the Hellenistic Worldview

At first, it seems that the Greeks had little or nothing to do with 1st century Jewish Palestine. The words "Hellenists" or "Hellenism" do not appear in any of the New Testament writings. Mark records only one encounter Jesus had with a "Greek", the Syrophoenician woman He encountered outside of Palestine in Tyre (7:26). John mentions a time when some Greeks wanted to meet with Jesus, but He refused them an audience (12:20-22).

So then, who were the Hellenists in Palestine and how did Jesus respond to them? To answer these questions it is necessary to study the history of the Herodians and understand their influence in Palestine in the time Jesus was born.

The Herodian dynasty ruled over Palestine from 40 B.C. – 100 A.D (See HANDOUT "The Herodian Dynasty"). They were not Jews, but Gentiles from Idumea. Herod the Great was the first in the line of kings installed by Rome to rule over Palestine. He was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 B.C. and because of his loyalty to Rome he was appointed king of the Jews in 40 B.C. The Jews were offended by his rule because Herod was not a member of David's royal family. To eliminate any threat from the Jewish Hasmonean family, whom he had displaced from the throne, Herod systematically had their leaders killed. Even though Herod tried in many ways to placate the Jews, including the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem, they never forgave him for destroying the Jewish royal family.

Herod the Great was well-learned, and received the finest education of his day, which meant that he would have learned everything from the Greeks. Herod

was a *Philhellene* (a lover of Hellenism). He hired Greek mercenaries; inscribed his coins in Greek as well as in Hebrew; educated his children after the Greeks; and designed numerous royal and civic building projects in the Greek style of architecture. The Hellenistic worldview reached its peak of influence in Palestine under Herod the Great who ruled Judea 37–4 B.C. Although Herod the Great was skilled in diplomacy and battle, and had undertaken many elaborate building projects, he is best remembered for his cruelty. Any threat, real or imagined, was swiftly dealt with – as is illustrated in the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem (Mt. 2:16).

Herod Antipas, or Herod the tetrarch, inherited this title along with parts of his father's, kingdom – later, his nephew would be named king of the Jews. He divorced his first wife to marry his niece Herodias, who was his half-brother Philip's wife. After John the Baptist denounced this marriage as unlawful, Antipas had John imprisoned. Then on the occasion of Antipas' birthday Herodias encouraged her daughter, Salome, to "dance naked before the king and his court." In appreciation of this, Antipas promised with an oath any gift Salome desired. Her request, as instructed by her mother, was for the head of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-11). Antipas is the Herod that Pilate sent Jesus to be tried (Lk 23:6-12).

When Agrippa became king of the Jews, Antipas at his wife's insistence, petitioned the Roman Emperor Caligula to make him king of the Jews instead. Agrippa accused Antipas of planning a revolt. Caligula sided with Agrippa, stripped Antipas of his title and lands and gave them to Agrippa. Antipas was banished to Gaul (39 A.D.). When his wife, Herodias challenged the Emperor's decision against Antipas, her wealth was also given to Agrippa, and she was banished to Gaul with her husband. Agrippa is best remembered for the death of Jesus' brother James, imprisoning Paul (Acts 12:21), and for his incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice. He died at the age of 54 (44 A.D.).

The Herodians rose to power by aligning themselves with Rome and expanded their power through political means rather than by conquest. They were never able or willing to challenge Rome's authority but were kept in power as long as they remained loyal to Caesar, maintained the peace of Rome, and collected the taxes for the Roman State.

Herod the Great was the first to be named "King of the Jews" by a Roman Caesar. He was hated and resented by the Jews. So in an attempt to placate them, Herod transformed the temple in Jerusalem into a magnificent structure. It was Herod's temple that Jesus stood in front of and told His disciples, "not one stone would be left upon another" (Lk 21:6). Herod admired the Greeks and surrounded himself with teachers accomplished in Greek art, literature, philosophy, and science. He launched massive building projects all over his kingdom inspired by

Greek architecture. He educated his children after the Greek culture, and by the time Jesus began His public ministry, two of Herod's sons ruled in Palestine:

- Philip the Tetrarch ruled over the northeastern area.
- Herod Antipas ruled over the region where John the Baptist and Jesus ministered. Antipas continued the building pattern of Herod the Great and built Tiberius after the ideal Greek architectural pattern (*polis*).

The *Herodians* mentioned in Scripture were more than the immediate members of the royal family; they were all the influential citizens of Palestine who aligned themselves with Herod's dynasty. Everywhere Jesus went He could see the Greek influence in the architecture and hear the names of people and places He visited (Philip, Andrew, Mary, Tyre, Caesarea, Decapolis, Lake Tiberius, and Galilee all bear Greek names).

The Gospel of Mark mentions two separate encounters involving Jesus and the Herodians (Mark 3:1-6; and 12:13-17). Except for His answer concerning paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus never responded directly to the Hellenists. In John 12:20 a group of Greek converts to the Jewish faith were in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. These Greeks approached Philip who had a Greek name, and asked him to arrange the meeting. However, Jesus was indirect and cryptic in His response to their request (vs. 23-28); included in His response were the words, "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Since Greek philosophy was concerned in particular with loving this life and the things of this world, these words of Jesus would have startled the Hellenists. The last direct confrontation Jesus had with the Hellenists is recorded in Luke 23:6-12.

We can gain a deeper insight into Jesus' answer to the Hellenists if we take a close look at Matthew 16:13-17:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Jesus did nothing coincidentally or in a haphazard way. So when he left Galilee and took His disciples to a place called Caesarea Philippi, there was a specific reason for it. It may seem strange that Jesus would take His disciples all

the way to Caesarea Philippi to ask them one specific question: “Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am?” But that is exactly what Jesus did. The reason Jesus brought them there to ask them that question is understood when we discover the fact that Caesarea Philippi was a center of Hellenism. Philip the Tetrarch revitalized the area and renamed the city for himself and Caesar. The influence of the Greeks could be seen everywhere in the architecture and Philip made it a cultural showcase with theatres and temples built to honor the Greek gods – especially the god Pan. It was a strategic city to Rome also, so there would have been a Roman garrison, civil administration, and a Roman bathhouse there as well. The area was part of Palestine, and therefore a strong Jewish presence and synagogue were there as well. So Caesarea Philippi was an economic, strategic, and cultural crossroads where the Roman, Greek, and Judaic worldviews intersected.

When Jesus asked, “who do men say that I am?” He was very specific in using the term “Son of Man” in reference to Himself. The divine “Son of Man” stood in stark contrast to the humanistic, ideal man of Hellenism. And Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” came to him not by philosophical reasoning, but as Jesus said, “...flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven...”

This whole encounter at Caesarea Philippi speaks volumes about Jesus’ response to Hellenism. As He led His disciples to a place overlooking the city architecturally and intellectually built upon the Hellenistic ideals of humanism, Jesus was telling His disciples that it was not by the humanistic gods of Hellenism nor by man’s wisdom (science, philosophy, art, etc.) that His disciples are enlightened, but it is *only* by divine revelation that Christ is made known.

Jesus’ Response to the Judaic Worldview

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17–19)

The foundation of the Judaic worldview is based on the belief that after the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai, God gave them the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and all other laws that were central to the establishment of Israel as a

people in covenant relationship with God (Exodus 21-23). The Jews had to be uncompromising on the Mosaic Law because as Deuteronomy 4:1-14 stated, the Law was permanent (vs. 13, 14), unchanging (v. 2), and the life and prosperity of the people depended upon perfect obedience to it (vs. 1, 5, 6).

Jesus challenged the Judaic worldview by challenging the accepted interpretations of the Law of Moses being taught by the scribes and Pharisees of that day. Although verses 17-20 of Matthew chapter 5 make it clear that the kingdom lifestyle about which He was teaching was in perfect harmony with the Old Testament revelation, the fact that what He taught about the meaning and fulfillment of the Law of Moses was totally out of sync with the established religious leaders.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious leaders had become the appointed protectors of the religious practices of the Jews. However, they were promoting a religious legalism that was only concerned with the outward appearances of conformity to the rules, regulations, and rituals of religious law. But the "kingdom lifestyle" that Jesus promoted fulfilled the Law's requirements by shifting the focus of attention away from the outward appearances of religious legalism and dealt with the inward motives and intents of the heart. Matthew’s Gospel emphasizes Jesus’ teachings on true righteousness – a righteousness that "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" because it is from the heart. The righteousness that Jesus spoke of cannot be imposed by the strict adherence to any religious system (Matthew 12:1, 2; 15:1, 2; 22:34-40. Also Mark 3:1, 2; Mark 14:55, 56; Luke 11:37, 38; Luke 13:14; John 5:15-18; and John 7:45-49). It is no wonder that Jesus found it necessary to preface His teachings on the Mosaic Law in His Sermon on the Mount with, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets."

The Judaic worldview taught that obedience to the Law made one clean so that they might enter the Lord’s temple. The priests, Pharisees and other religious leaders of the Jews considered themselves to be the Lord’s “gate keepers” and kept the Samaritans, Gentiles, and anyone else they considered “unclean” out of the Temple. But Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus was a direct threat to the religious leaders of the Jews because He taught that those who followed them, and who thought they could justify themselves before God on the basis of their acts of righteousness, would not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Jews were using the Mosaic Law and their religious traditions to exclude Gentiles, Publicans, the infirm, and sinners from the presence of God. Matthew’s Gospel makes it clear that Jesus offered healing and forgiveness for

sinners. The Jews placed the yoke of the Law upon the shoulders of sinners; Jesus removed that yoke and offered Himself on the cross to forgive their sins. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, 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." (Mt 26:28–29).

So in the end, those who held fast to the Judaic worldview were forced to either embrace a whole new paradigm, with Jesus Christ as the center and focus of their religion or reject Jesus and find a way to destroy Him and silence His followers.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON TWO

1. Consider the three worldviews of Jesus' time and place. How do these worldviews relate to our contemporary world?
2. Read Matthew 5:3-10 (The Beatitudes). How do these words of Jesus speak to our contemporary worldviews?
3. Consider the cross of Christ and the empty tomb. How do they represent the Christian worldview, and how do they challenge all other worldviews of our time and place?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES

NT 201-3

MATTHEW (Part Two)

JESUS, THE SPOKESMAN TO DISTORTION

"Each of the four Gospels has its own emphasis. Matthew's book is called, "the Gospel of the King." It was written primarily for Jewish readers. Mark's book, the Gospel of the Servant, was written to instruct Roman readers. Luke wrote mainly to the Greeks and presented Christ as the perfect "Son of Man," John's appeal is universal, and his message was, "This is the Son of God." No one Gospel is able to tell the whole story as God wants us to see it. But when we put these four gospel accounts together, we have a composite picture of the person and work of our Lord." – Warren Wiersbe "Be Loyal" pg. 11

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. Matthew's Portrait of Jesus
 1. The promised messiah of the Jews
- II. Jesus and the Law of Moses
 1. Jesus' teachings on the Ten Commandments
- III. The Law in the Kingdom of God
 1. Practicing the Kingdom Lifestyle

MATTHEW'S PORTRAIT OF JESUS

The Promised King and Messiah of the Jews

"If the Bible reader were to jump from Malachi into Mark, or Acts, or Romans, he would be bewildered. Matthew's Gospel is the bridge that leads us out of the Old Testament and into the New Testament." Warren Wiersbe

The key to understanding the Gospel of Matthew is that it is the **most Jewish** of all the Gospels. Too many Christians fail to fully understand the Gospels because they do not fully understand that the roots of their faith are sunk deep into the history of the Jewish people. Matthew's Gospel is **the bridge** between the Old

Testament and the New because it is the gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew: The Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth.

Matthew, once a despised tax collector but nevertheless a Jew, writes to show his own people that Jesus of Nazareth truly was the Messiah promised by the Old Testament prophets. Matthew knew that if he were going to convince them, he would have to answer the questions that must have burned in the heart of every first century Jew:

- If Jesus was the Messiah, why did His own people reject Him?
- If Jesus was the Messiah, what happened to the glorious Messianic kingdom foretold in the Scriptures?

The realization that answering these questions was Matthew's primary motivation in writing his Gospel helps us to understand the structure and significance of Matthew's Gospel. The reasons why Jesus was rejected by His own people, the evidence that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah of the Jews, and the answers to the questions about His kingdom, come as Matthew's story unfolds.

Matthew begins his Gospel by looking back. The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew firmly establishes Him as a descendent of Abraham, and therefore, His story belongs very much to the story of the Jewish people. His genealogy also firmly establishes Jesus as a descendent of David, and every Jew knew that the Messiah would have to be a descendent of David to fulfill Hebrew prophecy:

"David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.'" Ezekiel 37:24-28

Matthew follows his genealogy with the story of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth. At the same time Matthew weaves into the text more evidence from the Jewish Scriptures for Jesus' Messianic credentials:

- Christ's birth was the **miraculous fulfillment of the prophecy** given 700 years earlier by Isaiah (Is. 7:14)
- His birth was announced by the **Angel of the Lord**, a divine manifestation of Yahweh's personal involvement in the events that occurred on rare occasions in Israel's history (Note: Gen. 16:7-14; 22:9-18; Ex. 3:1-4:17)
- The Magi from the East saw and recognized a supernatural sign in the heavens and came seeking the **"King of the Jews"** (2:1-12)

The backdrop of prophetic fulfillment in the mysterious workings of God in Matthew's Gospel created an aura of the supernatural that the Jews accepted as part of their history as God's chosen people. The Old Testament prophecies supported Matthew's argument that from the very beginning, Jesus was **divinely selected and uniquely identified** as the One chosen to be God's Messiah.

As Matthew's narrative continued, he addressed other questions sure to be raised by Jewish leaders about Jesus' family background. Matthew 2:13-23 takes time to explain how Jesus' childhood fulfilled Jewish prophecy. His narrative includes references to Hosea and Jeremiah that would have been immediately understood by his Jewish readers. Matthew's reference to the child Jesus returning from Egypt helped to cement Jesus' identification as the Jewish Messiah. The phrase **"out of Egypt"** appears numerous times in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Lord reminded Israel time and time again how they were miraculously delivered from bondage in Egypt. The image of Israel as **"my son"** is transferred in a unique and personal way to their Messiah. When Jesus is baptized, Matthew records a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (3:17)

When the family returned from exile in Egypt, God directed Joseph to settle in Nazareth – and in so doing, Matthew says, it fulfilled another word, which was spoken by the prophets, **"He will be called a Nazarene."** Since there is no reference to Nazareth in the Old Testament, Matthew's statement seems remarkable to those unfamiliar with the interpretive methods of the Jewish rabbis. But this would have been entirely understood by his Jewish readers who looked for analogy, type, and even verbal allusions in the Old Testament. The fact that Matthew speaks of "the prophets" in general indicates that he is not speaking of a particular prophetic verse.

From the very beginning, Matthew's Gospel is a description of how God was directing the people, places and actions that fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the Jewish Messiah. Verse by verse, the history of God's children is intricately woven into the history of Jesus, God's Son. Jesus' genealogy makes it clear that His story is undeniably linked with Abraham, David, and with the whole history of God's chosen ones. As Israel long ago was led down to Egypt,

so was Jesus. Both were called out of Egypt by God to fulfill their destinies. The sufferings of Israel and her children is echoed in the sufferings of the mothers and children slaughtered by Herod.

Matthew uses **prophecies familiar to the Jews** to lay the foundation for his argument that Jesus was the Messiah. God had set His own mark upon Jesus, and just as Israel could not be destroyed until it fulfilled God's ultimate purpose, so too Jesus the Messiah could not be stopped. The story Matthew has to tell about Jesus is not the story of an ordinary man, or even of an exceptional Jewish rabbi. His Gospel is above all, the story of Israel's Messiah, God's Son, who also became the Savior of the world.

JESUS AND THE LAW OF MOSES

Of utmost importance to the Jews was keeping the statutes and the judgments of the Law delivered to their ancestors by Moses (Deuteronomy 4:1). Matthew's image of Jesus teaching the people and His disciples on a mountainside (Matthew 5 – 7) would have reminded the Jews of Moses' final address to the children of Israel on the blessings of obedience and curses of disobedience to God's commandments (Deuteronomy 27 – 30). Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by describing the **unconditional blessings** for citizens of the kingdom of heaven and then turned His attention to how the Commandments of God are fulfilled. Jesus' sermons brought out the **full, original, and intended** meanings of the commandments. He admonished the crowds to fulfill the Law beyond a superficial **outward conformity**. Jesus taught the people that fulfilling the Law of Moses required an **inward attitude of the heart** which would produce the good fruit of righteousness and not the bad fruit of hypocrisy.

At one time or another, Matthew's Gospel records how Jesus addressed each of the Ten Commandments in His sermons.

1. **You shall have no other gods before me.** (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:11). When Jesus faced the temptations of Satan in the Wilderness, He answered each of Satan's challenges with the Word of God. Jesus refused to bow His knee to any other: "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Matthew 4:10). In His Sermon on the Mount, He instructed all those who heard Him to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).
2. **You shall not make for yourself an idol** (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10). Unlike idol worshipers that worship images, Jesus instructed His followers to "pray to your Father, who is unseen." He also admonished them

not to pattern their prayer life after the pagans, who "keep on babbling... for they think they will be heard because of their many words" (Matthew 6:6-7). Jesus looked beyond the obvious idolatry of Pagan worship and spoke of the love of money and the pursuit of material possessions that can capture the heart and take the place of God, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Jesus warned His disciples: "No one 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 both God and Money." Matthew 6:24 (Note also Luke 16:13)

3. **You shall not misuse the name of the Lord** (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). In Matthew 5:33-37, Matthew 6:9 and again in Matthew 23:16-22, Jesus instructed the people on the proper way to address the LORD. At the same time, Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the pharisaical legal technicalities that made a mockery of God's sacred name: "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:12).
4. **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy** (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). No issue between the Jewish authorities and Jesus created more conflicts and controversies than the war of words they fought over the Jewish Sabbath. As Jesus' fame and popularity spread throughout the region, He drew greater and greater scrutiny upon His words and actions from the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who were the self-appointed, spiritual watchdogs over the people. As previously stated, Jesus' teachings on the Law almost always shift the emphasis away from an outward action or behavior that the scribes believed the Law was all about, and to the inner attitude or motivation of person in right relationship with His Father. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were obsessed with keeping up the outward appearances of a self-defined righteousness, but glossed over or completely ignored the inner, spiritual conditions of their hearts. Jesus called out the Pharisees for their obvious hypocrisies (Matthew 23:23-28).

Jesus' refusal to be frightened or intimidated by the authorities' power to excommunicate from the religious life of the community anyone who challenged their authority drove the Pharisees absolutely crazy. And yet it seems that to one degree or another, just about every teaching and action of Jesus challenged the power that the religious leaders exercised to keep the people under their control by Sabbath rules and regulations that were not

based upon the Law of Moses but had their origins with the traditions of men (Matthew 12:1-13). Jesus' refusal to submit to the Pharisees led them to plot how they might kill Him."

- 5. Honor your father and mother** (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Citing Isaiah 29:13 (Matthew 15:7-9), "...these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men...", Jesus gave a perfect example of how these legalists were rejecting God's laws and trampling them under their feet for the sake of their traditions.

When some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?" Jesus fired back at them "...you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition." And then Jesus turned the tables on them and asked them, "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:1-6). Using the commandment, "honor your father and mother", Jesus powerfully and clearly exposed the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law who claimed that the oral law of *korban* (the practice of setting aside money or property for the temple) to avoid selling it to care for elderly parents. In practice, everyone knew that *korban* was being used in a shallow way to override and circumvent a direct command of God for selfish purposes. Through this encounter with the teachers of the law and the other recorded examples (Matthew 19:16-19), Jesus upheld, confirmed, and "fulfilled" the letter and of most importance, the Spirit of the law of God.

- 6. You shall not murder** (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-24 affirms the commandment of His Father and at the same time transcends the teachers of the law who saw only the outward restriction on a human action while ignoring the murderous, inward attitude of a heart filled with hate and judgment – and an attitude that is the root cause of man's inhumanity to man:
- 7. You shall not commit adultery** (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:17). Jesus never quarrels with the Law and the Prophets. Contrary to the accusations of His opponents, His teachings validate Mosaic Law completely. Jesus' quarrels were only with those who made legalistic, man-made traditions to build a thick wall, separating those who needed most the "divine Physician." Jesus was longing to heal the spiritual wounds of sinners. He said to those who were preventing others from receiving God's forgiveness to "go and learn

what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice' for I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). Matthew 5:27-30 shows that Jesus was consistent with the Law of Moses concerning adultery and with His other observations upon how that commandment is to be fulfilled from the heart. In this, as in every case concerning the commandments of God, Jesus speaks with a greater authority ("You have heard that it was said... But I tell you...") than Moses or the other teachers of the Law. He teaches a "greater righteousness" than the pharisaical traditions while reaffirming the Scriptures and drawing out from them their full, true, intended meanings as only the Son of God could do.

- 8. You shall not steal** (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19). Jesus affirmed the commandment, "You shall not steal" in His encounter with the rich young ruler recorded in Matthew 19:17. But in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus looked farther and deeper into the attitudes of the heart towards material wealth and possessions and how those attitudes – right or wrong – affected the spiritual life of the individual that possessed them: "For where your treasure is," Jesus said, "there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Money and possessions make cruel masters and the ones who find themselves motivated by the love for them will soon discover the truth of Jesus' teaching that "No one 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 both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24).

Jesus' teachings about wealth and possessions in Matthew 6:19-34 help to explain His later statement in Mark 10:25, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one 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 both God and Money." Matthew 6:19-24

Jesus taught that the key to having a right attitude about wealth and worldly possessions is having a “good eye.” Implied in the language used here is that an eye that is “good” is “single”; you cannot walk straight with one eye on heaven and the other on worldly things. A person who attempts to do this will have double vision and will stagger through this life like a drunkard – first leaning one way, then the other. The only cure for this condition is to focus on one thing or another: the spiritual blessings of “seeking first the kingdom of heaven” or surrendering to a whole-hearted pursuit of mammon. If a person’s heart is in the right place, their treasure will be in heaven and not in their bank accounts, jewelry, land, automobiles, and houses.

You don’t have to be wealthy to be obsessed with money. The poor can be just as fixated upon obtaining mammon. Most of the people in this world worry, not knowing from one day, week, or month to the next if they will be able to feed their family. If there is drought, flood, or famine hunger will surely follow and the farmer may not be able to feed his family until the next year. War, or economic disaster can strike any nation at any time and wipe out a lifetime of savings in a matter of moments. This world is filled with uncertainty and the devil knows how to destroy a heart with worry, doubt, and fear. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus understood that worry, but He made it clear that the only way to not be overcome with fear is to trust fully in God.

9. You shall not give false testimony (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). God’s word is trustworthy and true. If it were not, chaos and confusion would abound in the kingdom of heaven because we would not know from one day to the next if God would contradict or countermand a previous command. One day we might be in God’s favor and the next, find ourselves under His curse even though we were following what He had already written. God often bound Himself by an oath, not because He could not be trusted to keep His word, but in concession to our unbelief. It follows then, that God’s people must reflect the character of the God they serve and be faithful and true in word as well as deed (Matthew 5:33-37).

Jesus taught that a man may judge by what is on the surface of things, but God looks at the heart. The Pharisees thought they could play tricks with God and create legal loopholes to slip through a promise or commitment that they felt was too costly to keep, but they were only deceiving themselves. Our God is a God who sees into the heart of every man, and nothing escapes the light of His word (Matthew 15:15-20).

10. You shall not covet (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). Murder, adultery, divorce, swearing falsely, revenge seeking, and conflicts between nations, races, and families – all have their roots sunk deep into the bitter waters of covetousness. Jesus knew this and addressed each issue in His sermons in the context of the necessity of having a right heart of obedience to God and forgiveness towards others that truly fulfills the letter and spirit of the law (Note Matthew 5:19-48).

THE LAW IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus' teachings on the Law far exceeded the demands of the scribes and the Pharisees: “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Everywhere He went, Jesus taught how the righteousness that the Law called for was of a very different nature than the righteousness exhibited by the religious elite of the day (Matt. 5:20). Jesus taught the Mosaic Law correctly: that its regulations and basic principles were intended to reveal God's **moral character** and inspire men to be like Him. The Law was not given to bring salvation but was given to drive men back into a right relationship with God where the inner transformation, which only God can work, can take place.

Therefore, in the Kingdom of God the issue in the Old Testament law of murder was not so much the act of violence as the anger that led to it. The issue was not where, when, or how to make an offering, but was to bring reconciliation between men and God. The issue was not so much the act of adultery as was the lust that led husbands astray and caused men to treat women as objects rather than persons. The issue in the law of divorce was not when it was permissible but was one of loyalty and commitment to the marriage covenant under God. The issue in the law concerning oaths was not when an oath might be broken but was the essential integrity and honesty of the individual making the vow before God and men. The issue in the "eye for an eye" principle was not the right of the individual to receive equal compensation for an injury but was the unrighteous demand for revenge when forgiveness is called for. In the kingdom of heaven the call to love one's neighbor does not permit someone to hate anyone outside of the kingdom.

Therefore, all of Jesus' teachings on Old Testament law can best be summed up in His answer to the scribe who asked him which is the greatest commandment of the law:

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40

(see HANDOUT “Jesus Teaches on Love”)

Practicing The Kingdom Lifestyle

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the three primary pillars for the devotional lives of those who practice most traditional religions; and the Jewish people of Jesus’ time and place were no different. Jesus was not opposed to any of these practices as part of one’s religious expression, but as with His interpretations of the Ten Commandments, Jesus was concerned with the **outward shows** of righteousness that were being practiced by the scribes and Pharisees.

“Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Matthew 6:1-8

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:16-18

Jesus instructs the citizens of His kingdom to give in secret to pray in secret and to fast in secret so that the Father who sees what is done in secret will reward

them. Those who seek the recognition of men first are motivated in their actions by a desire to build themselves up in the eyes of men. They may succeed in establishing for themselves a reputation for piety, but their reward will have no eternal value.

Practicing the kingdom lifestyle means our first priority is to establish and nurture an **intimate relationship** with the Father. Men judge by what is on the outside, but only God can judge the heart. We can do the right things out of selfish motivations and still be rewarded in this life, but if we truly seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we may not receive any recognition in this life, but we will most definitely receive an eternal reward.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:7-12

The religious elites of Jesus’ day were experts at laying down rule upon rule that must be followed to be numbered among the righteous few. It was against this kind of self-centered, legalistic judgmentalism that Jesus spoke against in His Sermon on the Mount.

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” Matthew 7:1-6.

Jesus' words, "judge not so you will not be judged" are often misinterpreted to mean that if we do not want God to judge us, we must not judge others. But Did

Jesus really say that citizens of the kingdom are never to judge unrighteousness to any extent? The thought behind this passage is the basic human tendency to treat others exactly the same way they treat us. In other words, if we are mean, rude, or judgmental towards others, they will be mean, rude, or judgmental back to us (for "by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you"); and if we, as citizens of God's kingdom, treat others with love and compassion we can and will have a positive influence over the lives of others. Only first remove the log of self-righteous judgmentalism out of your eye so that you can see that person as God sees them, and minister to them in humility and love. However, verse 6 indicates that although we are not to judge harshly those around us, we are not to abandon sound spiritual discernment in dealing with those unbelievers who expose themselves as enemies of the followers of Jesus.

“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Matthew 10:11-16

We must be very cautious not to judge anyone as "dogs" and "swine" and give everyone a fair opportunity to hear the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus commanded His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." We must be careful not to say that anyone is beyond salvation or assume that some sinners are hopelessly wicked. Just because a person does not immediately receive with gladness the Good News when it is first, second, or even the third time it is preached to them does not mean they never will. At the same time we must not waste the message of salvation upon those who refuse to hear and reject the Lord's forgiveness because they only want to revel in sin.

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name

of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Matthew Henry said in his commentary, "Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those who will turn again and rend them. Let them not be righteous over much, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and precious is the blood of his subjects to him."

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON THREE

1. Compare:
 Matt. 2:2 with Jeremiah 23:5
 Matt. 2:6 with Micah 5:2
 Matt. 2:18 with Jer. 31:15
 Matt. 2:23 with Hosea 11:1

 How does Matthew 2:2 establish the royal mission and destiny of Jesus with Jewish prophecy?
2. Explain how Matthew 2:13-23 answers the Jews questions concerning Jesus coming from Nazareth instead of King David's ancestral home. (Note: Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 31:15. See also Matthew 3:7).
3. Review Jesus' teachings on the Law of Moses in this lesson. Explain what Jesus meant when He said that He upheld, confirmed, and "fulfilled" the letter and the Spirit of the law.
4. Read Genesis 12:1-3. The Hebrew root for "Mammon" means "entrust." Mammon was the wealth that people entrusted to another for safekeeping. Consider Jesus' teachings on mammon. How has mammon lost its original meaning and purpose?
5. Review Matthew 6:19-34; 7:11. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Was Jesus opposed to people enjoying the good things of this life including good food, drink, and clothes to wear?

**SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES
NT 201-4
MATTHEW (Part Three)
“THE PARABLES OF JESUS”**

Lesson Outline

- I. The Mission of the Parables
- II. Introduction to the Parables of the Kingdom
- III. Why Parables?

The Mission of the Parables

“Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children.” Psalm 78:1-4

In Part Two of the lessons on the Gospel of Matthew we examined the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and how Jesus fulfilled the commandments of God, teaching the eternal, universal, and intended meanings of those Commandments. Yet, it was His mission, not only to teach his disciples about the Law of Moses, but also how to unlock the **mysteries and power of the kingdom of heaven**. In His sermons, Jesus introduced a new and unexpected reality of God’s kingdom here on Earth to His disciples. In particular, His “Sermon on the Mount” described this bold new concept of how the citizens of His eternal and invisible kingdom should live.

The people were amazed at Jesus’ teachings because He not only spoke with an authority that no man ever had, but also because everywhere he went, Jesus **demonstrated the reality of His kingdom** through the many miracles He performed. Above and beyond His personal power and authority, Jesus also gave His disciples the authority in His name to heal the sick and over all the power of Satan (John 14:12-14).

The Old and New Testaments contain **two hundred and fifty** parables, emblems, or figures of speech employed by a variety of authors. In each case, the

parables of the Bible – especially those used by the Lord Jesus Christ – were intended to communicate or reinforce divine truths:

“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

‘I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’”
Matthew 13:34–35

Jesus recognized that the parabolic method of presenting truth was well established in Jewish literature, and He incorporated the parable into His teachings, “and without a parable he did not speak to them.” However, Jesus elevated this method of teaching to its highest level and contributed His unique parables to reinforce the efficacy of this style of spiritual teaching.

A careful study of Christ’s parables indicates they are far more than simple pastoral stories designed to help humble and uneducated peasants understand His teachings. The parables of Jesus are powerful **word-pictures** intended to reveal **the mysteries** of the kingdom of heaven to those who are open to hear from God, while simultaneously hiding these same truths from those whose hearts are too hard, rocky, or thorny to hear and receive the Word of God plainly spoken. A parable has been described as “**an outward symbol of an inward reality**”. And Jesus was the master at drawing the power out of every parable He told. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...” (Romans 1:20).

The early Christian theologian Tertullian said, “All things in Nature are prophetic outlines of Divine operations, God not merely speaking parables but doing them.” That means, to be successful, a parable must express the perfect harmony that exists between **the natural and the spiritual world in narrative form** and must be true to nature or to human relationships.

A parable should also impart **meaningful spiritual truth** to the mind of the hearer using material objects to express those spiritual truths. Parables reveal that nature is much more than it seems. Through His parables, Jesus reveals the spiritual reality that is hidden from the unbelieving and unspiritual materialists. Parables reveal to those who have ears to hear that this temporal world, which we see, is in fact a reflection of or template for Christ’s spiritual, heavenly kingdom that we do not see. Both kingdoms operate according to a particular set of laws. Jesus’ parables are not mere mental imagery – window dressing for Divine

instruction – but parables are points of comparison between the spiritual kingdom of God and nature that disclose essential spiritual truths.

Generally speaking, the root word used for *parable* means “**to set side by side**,” and indicates the idea of comparing two distinct objects. A parable of the kingdom is literally **placing beside for comparison**, earthly truths with heavenly truths – a similitude, or an illustration of one subject to another. Heaven and Earth are the work of the One God; and our study we will discover that The Parables of the Kingdom may in fact be earthly in form, but in truth they are heavenly in spirit.

Herbert Lockyer stated, “When our Lord appeared among men as a Teacher, He took possession of the parable and honored it by making it His own, by using it as the vehicle for the highest truth of all.” Jesus made parables act like mirrors that superimpose the reflected images of the visible, natural world God created over the invisible, supernatural kingdom of heaven. So, “those who have ears to hear” can use the parables Jesus taught to discover a deeper spiritual meaning to their faith, increase intimacy with the Father, and grow in obedience to Jesus Christ who is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15).

Parables Are a Unique Form of Spiritual Teaching in That They Both Attract and Sift Out Those Who Hear Them.

Not everyone who came to listen to Jesus’ sermons was receptive to His words. Only those who had “eyes to see and ears to hear” – those who were genuinely drawn to God – would diligently dig and seek out the deeper spiritual meaning of a parable. A parable is intended to arouse the hearer to seek the Lord of the parable and have Him reveal the hidden meaning to them. Once the parable is fully understood, it is sure to be remembered long after the main body of the sermon is forgotten. The parables Jesus used were designed to hold the attention of those who listened to Him, to excite their consciences, and to inspire them to respond in obedience to what they had heard and understood. Parables are reservoirs of truth, containing powerful word pictures. Using the language of symbols, Jesus, the Master Painter, composed these pictures, and created enduring images to communicate Divine truths that would be preserved and passed down from generation to generation.

Many Bible scholars have said that there are two extremes to be avoided when interpreting parables: one is **to make too much of them**; the other is to **make too little of them**. Although each parable contains valuable lessons of a spiritual nature, not every word of the parable is charged with hidden meaning. All of the parables may be for us, but not everything within a parable is about us. It is essential to understand the parable within the context of the sermon, as well as

within the broader, universal context of the present reality of the eternal Kingdom of God that Jesus came to reveal. If we are transparent and sincere in our quest for truth about the kingdom of heaven, we can rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal to us Christ’s intended meaning for each of His parables.

Introduction To the Parables of The Kingdom

“In these parables we can discern the unconquerable democracy of Christ’s Christianity as a manifestation of redeeming love in which the whole human race is included. By them the peoples of East and West are made aware of god’s fatherly love, transcendent grace, everlasting mercy, and inerrant justice.” S.P. Cadman

The parables, emblems and figures of speech used by the Lord Jesus to describe the Kingdom of heaven during His earthly ministry vary in number from commentary to commentary. In a way, it could be said that every parable Jesus spoke is either directly or indirectly related to the kingdom of God He came to reveal. Some commentaries take the words of Matthew 13:34 (“without a parable, He did not speak to them”) quite literally and have attempted to cast His entire oral ministry in parabolic form. However, depending upon how a parable is defined, the total number of parables of Jesus can number anywhere from twenty-five to seventy-five. In the strictest definition of this term used by Christian theologians, the number is about thirty. (See HANDOUT “The Parables of Jesus”). Included in these parables are thirteen that may be classified as **Parables of the Kingdom**.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you understood all these things?’

They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’

Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’” Matthew 13:51-52

Jesus, the Master teacher, was wise enough to recognize that men would not easily forget the principles of the kingdom He taught in His sermons if they were couched in the form that is easiest and most surely remembered: that of the story parable. The kingdom parables have an enduring quality in that they not only relate to the people, places, and things of the ancient world of the Old and New Testaments, but they reflect the same world in which men live, suffer, and are tempted today. From the beginning, Christian teachers have noted how these stories lift sinner’s minds above their selfish ambitions, enlighten those who are ignorant of the kingdom of heaven, set free those who are oppressed by social

customs, release those who understand them from the legalistic religious traditions of men, and have the power to turn the sinful back to God. These parables of the kingdom not only reveal the present reality of the kingdom Jesus brought to His disciples, but they also reveal His compassion for the lost individuals today who are earnestly seeking God for salvation.

“In every age the parables prove their startling modernity. They are more recent than today’s newspaper; for a newspaper follows the fashion, and a fashion because it has become a fashion has begun to die. The parables utter the eternal verities by which all fashions, the shifting moods of an indifferent society, are judged. They are as recent as present breathing, as vivid in their tang as the ‘now’ of immediate experience. The preacher, therefore, must handle the Parables for they are, ‘spirit and life’.” Dr. George A Buttrick

Many students of these parables have sought to discover deeper **symbolic, prophetic, or eschatological** meanings behind each and every word Jesus spoke. However, perhaps the most practical way of understanding the parables of Jesus is to read them for their own merits, searching for what may be applied in the personal lives of citizens of God’s kingdom. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was concerned for those who came to Him, “like sheep without a shepherd.” His teachings were intended to encourage and enlighten those who listened, and revealed principles of the kingdom that were intended to be applied to everyday life. The true worth of Jesus’ parables does not depend upon some new and varied truths that we are able to extract from them, but their worth is found in their **progressive and practical application** of kingdom principles into our daily lives.

“And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.” Mark 6:34

The parables Jesus taught demonstrated that He was fully aware of the daily lives of the people all around Him. He understood the struggles of farmers who sowed the seed, dressed, and tilled the earth, and reaped the harvest in its season. Jesus understood the times and seasons of those who tended the vineyards. He knew their times of reaping the fruit of the vine, and of the fig tree. Jesus’ parables showed that He saw what a day’s wage would bring, and that He could relate to those who had to work hard for a living. Jesus moved with ease between the rich and poor, royalty and paupers, Pharisees, and tax collectors. So, the words of His parables were designed to communicate the principles of His kingdom to all

people. No one is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. Only those who refused to believe and rejected His offer of salvation were denied entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Why Parables?

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record for us the beginning of Jesus’ parabolic kingdom ministry. In Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 & 13 we see a shift in Jesus’ public sermons. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus emphasized greatly the importance of hearing and believing His words: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). Because Jesus’ words were as much an expression of His divine authority as were His many heavenly signs, wonders, and great miracles, it is significant when He changed direction in His teaching ministry and introduced a new and unexpected teaching method to the large crowds that followed Him. This change in His public teaching ministry was not lost on His disciples. Mark 4:10, and Luke 8:9 convey the same thought: the disciples recognized that Jesus was withholding the plain meaning of His words in public, and that they would have to ask Him privately what His words truly meant. But Matthew 13:10 adds more significance to the moment by including the specific question asked by His disciples, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

The disciples’ question implied that they recognized how Jesus was introducing a new and unexpected teaching method to the large crowds that came to hear Him speak. By this point in time, Jesus had been preaching and teaching all around the region. He had taught at the Temple, in synagogues, and out in the open for months, but before this time, His sermons were clear and direct. Jesus used symbols, metaphors, and allegories throughout His teaching ministry to illustrate particular points He was making (for example Matthew 7:15-27), but in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 & 13, the Parable becomes the heart of His message, and no explanation for the meanings of the parables are given, except in private to His disciples. Jesus’ answer to the question, “why parables?” explained His purpose for teaching in parables:

“He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they

understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

“Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
And seeing you will see and not perceive;
For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.”

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Matthew 13:11–17)

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

‘I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’”
(Matthew 13:34–35).

(See also Mark 4:11-12; and Luke 8:10).

The fact that three of the gospel writers included Jesus’ explanation of why He began to speak in parables highlights the significance and uniqueness of His parables and especially the parables concerning **the kingdom of God**.

There was a prophetic aspect to His use of these parables; the prophets of Israel foretold the Messiah’s parabolic teaching ministry, and many of the parables contained prophetic messages for those who followed Jesus then and for all those who will follow Him until the end of the age. Jesus explained to His followers that, on the one hand, He used the parables to reveal truth to some, but on the other hand, He used those same parables to hide truth from others. Which is why Jesus referred to the prophets when He gave the answer to why He was teaching them in parables, saying, “...blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

It is difficult for those who have an evangelistic mindset to grasp the idea that an important part of what Jesus taught was intended to be hidden from “those on the outside”, but that is precisely what Jesus said (Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). Of course, we must never forget that the whole idea of the Gospel of salvation is for as many people as possible to hear it, so that those who are on the “outside” of the kingdom will believe and come “inside” where they will discover the same mysteries of the kingdom that have been revealed to the church. Therefore, we must be wise in what we preach to the unsaved because, as Jesus pointed out, not everyone is ready to hear and receive the word of the kingdom.

In his letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:14-16), Paul instructed his disciple concerning how Christians ought to conduct themselves in **“God’s household.”** The church of the living God.” He wrote that the church, is the “pillar and foundation of the truth, which is the **great mystery of godliness**: “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” Here, Paul affirms the words of Psalm 25:14 which says, “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” The Holy Spirit, through the church, reveals the mysteries of the gospel of the kingdom – including the plan of God’s redemption for both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 2:7-10 Paul stated it another way:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’
[Isaiah 64:4; 65:17]

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...”

It is important to note at this point that Jesus was not implying that the mysteries of the kingdom are too complicated, complex, or too hard to understand. The Greek term used by Mark helps to shed more light on Jesus’ intended meaning. In the Greek, the word for mystery has a technical meaning that indicates something which is quite unintelligible to the person who has not been properly initiated and instructed on its meaning. However, at the same time, it is perfectly clear to the person who has been introduced to and trained in the fundamental

realities of the secret knowledge being communicated. William Barclay in his commentary on Mark 4:10-12, said this:

“In New Testament times in the pagan world, one of the great features of popular religion was what were called the mystery religions. These religions promised communion with and even identify with some god, whereby all the terrors of life and of death would be taken away. Nearly all these mystery religions were based on the story of some god who had suffered and died and risen again; they nearly all found their expression in the form of passion plays... As the play was played out, the worshipper felt at one with the god both in suffering and in triumph, and passed through death to immortality by union with the god. The point is that to the uninitiated the whole thing would have been meaningless; but to the initiated the thing was full of meaning which they had been taught to see.”

Understanding this context of the mysteries of the kingdom in Jesus' parables helps to explain the difficult meaning of the verses that follow Matthew 13:11-12 in which Jesus specifically references the passage from Isaiah 6:9-10 which concerns those who are unable to hear or understand the Word of God.

By the time Jesus started His earthly ministry, the people had become like Israel in the days of Isaiah, the “people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes”. Jesus began his public ministry by preaching, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15). But He saw that many in the crowds of people following Him were **unable to comprehend** the gospel He was telling them to believe in. The expectations of the messianic kingdom to come were blinding the eyes of the Jews who were looking for a conquering, warrior Messiah who would drive out the hated Roman occupiers, march into Jerusalem, and establish an exclusively Jewish kingdom ruled by the Lion of Judah and his chosen righteous few. They could not comprehend the sacrificial Lamb of God Messiah who came to seek and save the lost, open prison doors to release those in spiritual bondage, and open the doors of heaven to all (Jews and Gentiles) who would lay down their burdens of sin and shame and come to Him for salvation. Jesus' audience would readily embrace the kingdom of their expectations, but Jesus would not allow them to enter the kingdom under false pretenses. Therefore, He chose to hide the reality of the presence and power of the kingdom from those who were not ready to receive it.

The modern application for preachers, teachers, and evangelists of our day might be to make sure that your audience understands the foundational truths of our salvation in Christ before you start telling them of all the promises of God that

will come to those whose hearts are fully surrendered to Christ. All too often, Christians are quick to show supernatural signs and wonders to unbelievers and promise unsaved people that all of their prayers will be answered, all their problems will be solved, and that they will have unconditional health and prosperity. But without an understanding of how Christians are to conduct themselves in the church (the household of God), immature Christians will not obey the commands to be a holy nation and royal priesthood in this age. We must avoid the temptation to reduce the mysteries of the kingdom to a simple formula of repeating a simple prayer, being baptized, and going to church on Sundays.

Matthew 13:11-17; Mark 4:11-12; and Luke 8:10 mean that Jesus would not accept half-baked followers who did not truly know Him (Matthew 7:21-23). Immature followers who do not fully understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ will fail to overcome the temptations that Jesus warned must come to every believer; or they will melt away at the first signs of trials and persecutions that come with the world's hatred of Jesus Christ and His followers (John 15:18-25).

Study questions

1. What is the “Mission of the Parable” in Jesus' teachings?
2. What must a parable contain to be successful?
3. What are the two extremes that must be avoided when interpreting the parables?
4. Why did Jesus say the mysteries of the kingdom are not for everybody?
5. In his letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:14-16), what did Paul mean when he wrote that the church, is the “pillar and foundation of the truth, which is the great mystery of godliness?”

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES

NT 201-5

MARK – Part One

“JESUS: MESSIAH, SON OF GOD, & SAVIOR”

THE GOSPEL OF MARK (Mark – Author)

Approximate Date Written: A.D. 55-65

Original and Primary Audiences: The Christians in Rome, where this Gospel was written, and all believers.

Purpose: To present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus, the obedient Servant and Son of God to a largely Gentile audience. Mark records more miracles than does any other Gospel.

Context: John Mark was not one of the original 12 disciples, but he accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). Mark’s gospel is believed by many scholars to be the first Gospel written. The other three Gospels quote all but 31 verses of Mark.

LESSON OUTLINE

The purpose of this lesson is to present the Four Views of Jesus presented by the writers of the Gospels.

- I. Comparing the Four Gospels
 1. Matthew – the promised King of the Jews
 2. Mark – the Servant of God
 3. Luke – the Son of Man
 4. John – the Son of God

- II. To further understand how the Gospel of Mark was understood in its original context by its primary audience.
 1. The Roman Gentiles
 2. Jesus: The Son of God
 3. To understand how Mark’s Gospel is understood by Christians today.



COMPARING THE FOUR GOSPELS

“Each of the four Gospels has its own emphasis. Matthew’s book is called, “the Gospel of the King.” It was written primarily for Jewish readers. Mark’s book, the Gospel of the Servant, was written to instruct Roman readers. Luke wrote mainly to the Greeks and presented Christ as the perfect “Son of Man,” John’s appeal is universal, and his message was, “This is the Son of God.” No one Gospel is able to tell the whole story as God wants us to see it. But when we put these four gospel accounts together, we have a composite picture of the person and work of our Lord.” – Warren Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, pg. 11

Before anyone begins a serious study of the life of Christ from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it is essential to understand that these writers were not biographers. Their intention was not to write comprehensive, day-by-day, or event-by-event accounts of Jesus’ life story. In fact, the Apostle John doubted that a complete biography of Jesus could ever be written (John 21:25). Therefore, we must approach the Gospels the way the authors intended them to be read. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had one thing in common: they were all **missionaries and evangelists**. That means they wrote their Gospels with one primary goal in mind: to **convince their readers** that Jesus Christ was indeed who the Christians said He was. Luke stated the best motives of those who wrote the Gospels in the introduction to his Gospel:

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Luke 1:1–4

All four Gospels present the life and teachings of Jesus. However, each book focuses on a unique facet of Jesus and his character. To understand more about the specific characteristics of Jesus, one must read every one of the four Gospels. Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar, and each one supports the other, the subtle differences between them help to fill in more details. John’s Gospel is different from the rest in many aspects. However John and the other Synoptic

Gospels **never contradict or undermine** each other on anything Jesus is reported to have said or done (see chart below).

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus is	The promised king	The Servant	The Son of Man	Son of God
The original Readers were	Jews	Gentiles, Romans	Greeks	Christians throughout the World
Significant Themes	Jesus is the Messiah because He fulfilled O.T. Prophecy	Jesus backed up His words with actions	Jesus was God but also fully human	Belief in Jesus is required for salvation
Character of the writer	Teacher	Storyteller	Historian	Theologian
Greatest emphasis is on	Jesus' sermons and words	Jesus' miracles and actions	Jesus' humanity	The principles of Jesus' teachings

(From "Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps", Tyndale House Publishers, 2001)

Jesus' fulfillment of **Old Testament prophecies** and how He fulfilled **Mosaic Law** are emphasized in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew described Jesus' **miracle-working power** as further proof of His divine credentials. Matthew's Gospel showed his Jewish brethren that from the very beginning, Jesus was **divinely selected and uniquely identified** to be the One chosen to be God's Messiah.

Mark's Portrait of Jesus to the Gentiles

The fact that Mark's primary audience is **not Jewish** may be determined by the way he describes Jesus. Gone is the long genealogy that proves He is descended from the tribe of Judah and of King David (a Gentile audience would not have been interested in the proof of Jesus' Jewish credentials). Mark's Gospel is less concerned with Jesus and the Law of Moses than with **Jesus' actions** (a Gentile audience would have been unfamiliar with Mosaic Law and would have had no interest in keeping it). Mark's description of Jesus can be captured in two verses:

- "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1
- "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

Chapter by chapter, the book of Mark unfolds the dual focus of Christ's life:

1. **He is no ordinary Man**; His words and actions reveal His divinity.
2. To finish the mission He was sent to fulfill required **great service and sacrifice**.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus is a Servant on the move, instantly responsive to the will of the Father. By preaching, teaching, and healing, He ministers to the needs of others even to the point of His own death. And after His Resurrection, Jesus commissioned His followers to continue His work in His power – **servants following in the steps of the perfect Servant Son of God**.

The internal evidence of Mark's Gospel indicates that Gentiles, who knew little about Hebrew theology, were his primary audience. Mark takes the time to explain to his readers the Aramaic expressions he uses – something he would never have to do with Jewish readers:

- Mark 3:17 – *Boanerges*, which means "Sons of Thunder"
- Mark 5:41 – *Talitha kum* which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"
- Mark 7:11 – *Corban*, which means, "a gift devoted to God"
- Mark 7:34 – *Ephphatha*, which means, "Be opened"
- Mark 14:36 – *Abba*, which means, "Father" (or "Daddy")
- Mark 15:34 – *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Scholars that study the language of Mark have noted that he frequently used Latin grammatical constructions and used expressions that reflected the Latin dialect. For example:

- Mark 15:16 "the palace that is, the Praetorium..."
- Mark 12:42 "Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans."

Although we recognize those elements of Mark's Gospel that seem to appeal to the Roman Gentile audience, we cannot neglect the fact that Mark was a Jew and his primary source was the **Apostle Peter**, who was also a Jew. So, it could be said that Mark was a being a **cross-cultural missionary** when he wrote his Gospel. He was a Jewish missionary writing to reach a primarily Roman audience with the "good news" of Jesus Christ – the Jewish Messiah and Savior of both Jews and Gentiles. As is true with all of the Gospels, the central theme of the book is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, but Mark relates the story in a way that would appeal to

his mostly Roman listeners. He wanted to leave a strong impression of Jesus that would communicate to those who were steeped in a Roman worldview and that valued a civil law and order which flowed from Caesar on down.

So Mark's gospel is marked by **rapid movement**; gone are the lengthy genealogies of Matthew and Luke because Gentiles would not be particularly interested in the evidence establishing Jesus' Jewish credentials as the Messiah who was destined to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem. Instead, Mark shows his Gentile readers that, although His own people rejected the Son of God, He achieved ultimate victory over what appeared to be defeat. Mark just touches on John the Baptist's ministry, Jesus' baptism, His wilderness experience, and the calling of the disciples (all are covered in the first 20 verses of his Gospel). Mark almost immediately launches into his report about the message and ministry of Jesus.

Mark's Gospel sounds more like a military debriefing than a story; he describes Jesus going here and there, making things happen. The people who encounter Jesus on His journey are often amazed by His teachings and awe struck by His miracles. In quick succession, Mark describes Jesus casting out demons, healing diseases, and even forgiving sins. Every movement is intended to portray Jesus as a Man of action exercising divine authority wherever He goes. Christ's healing on the Sabbath demonstrates that as the Son of God, He also holds supreme religious authority – an authority that surpasses those who claimed to be the authentic interpreters of Moses (Mark 2:18-27).

Mark reports a series of incidents that would be significant to those who understood the worldly power and authority that Rome represented. At the same time, through these events, Jesus was demonstrating a power and authority that is above and beyond any earthly power and authority.

- (Mark 3:22-30) The leaders of the Jewish people rejected Jesus – they did not understand or respect His power and authority, and even accused Him of being under Satan's power – but Christ shows that not only is He Satan's enemy, but He is greater than the prince of demons and is able to plunder Him at will. Rome's Legions had conquered the Western World; they invaded cities and looted homes on their way to Supreme power. So they would immediately grasp the kind of power and authority Jesus possessed.
- Caesar's word was law in the Empire, and Roman citizens were expected to obey the will of Caesar or face severe punishment. So Mark stressed Jesus' teaching that only those willing to believe and do the will of God will understand His teachings and enter into His eternal kingdom:

"I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." Mark 3:28-29

"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:35

"The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables." Mark 4:11

But Mark goes even further to demonstrate Christ's superiority over Caesar:

- He stills the storm, showing His authority over the natural world (4:35-41)
- He drives out a legion of demons, showing His authority over massed supernatural forces (5:1-20)
- He cures a woman suffering from a chronic, incurable disease (5:21-34)
- And even raises the dead (5:35-43)

Mark lets his narrative speak for itself as he tells the story of Jesus, the Servant who constantly ministers to others through preaching, healing, teaching, and, ultimately, His own death and resurrection. The conclusion is inescapable: The Man who did these things is more than a mere man. He is, as Mark announced in the opening verse of his Gospel, the very Son of God!

Jesus in Mark's Gospel "The Son of God, and Servant of All"

"It may well be true to say that of all the titles of Jesus the title Son of God comes most automatically to our lips; and yet it may also be true to say that of all the titles of Jesus it is the title of which the meaning is least clearly defined in our minds." – William Barclay

The Title Son of God (or its equivalents "the Son," "my Son," etc.) occur more than 124 times in the New Testament. So, the title is not unique to Mark's Gospel. However, Mark begins his Gospel declaring Jesus is the Son of God, and he makes this a major theme in his gospel by using it at critical turning points in Jesus' ministry (1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61-62). The last time the title is used in Mark's gospel is when the Gentile witness to the crucifixion (a Roman centurion) declares, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39), which becomes a

foreshadowing of faith in Jesus Christ being received in large numbers throughout the Roman Empire.

Mark does not ignore his Jewish audience completely. Immediately after declaring, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...” in verse one, he quotes from the Jewish prophets in the next two verses:

²As it is written in the Prophets:

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.” [Malachi 3:1]

³“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make His paths straight.’” [Isaiah 40:3]

Hundreds of years before Jesus and John the Baptist were born, the prophet Isaiah had predicted they would come. Isaiah’s prophecies had comforted several generations as they looked forward to the coming of their Messiah. As the Jews read the book, Mark wanted them to know that **God kept His promise to them**. At the same time, Mark’s Gentile audience needed to be convinced that the Gospel he wrote about was more than just a story; it was **the fulfillment of God’s Word**. Mark was revealing God’s plan for the salvation of all people.

Each of the Gospel writers had their own reasons for introducing John the Baptist in their story of Jesus Christ. Mark begins his Gospel with the story of John the Baptist apart from the story of Jesus’ birth because his Roman audience would have understood that important Romans were always preceded by an **announcer or herald**.

In ancient Rome and Greece heralds were important aides to the kings. They were used for such tasks as maintaining order in meetings, making proclamations, and bearing official messages. To the Pagans these messengers were associated with Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Heralds of the gods were sacred; they carried a staff as a symbol of divine authority. In the Roman Empire, heralds retained much of their civic importance, assisting magistrates in assemblies and law courts, and bearing messages from Rome to other states. Whenever a herald arrived in town, the people knew that either someone of prominence was coming, or that they were bringing a message from them.



“Because Mark’s audience was primarily Roman Christians, he began his book

with John the Baptist, whose mission it was to announce the coming of Jesus, the most important man who ever lived. Roman Christians would have been less interested in Jesus’ birth than in this messenger who prepared the way.” (*Life Application Bible Notes*. (2007). (p. 1612). Tyndale).

Mark was fully aware that the world around him was acquainted with certain heroes and mythological figures being called sons of one god or another. Pagan myths included champions who owed their birth to the union of a god with a mortal maid. The tales of Hercules, Achilles, Dionysus, and Orpheus are just a few of the many myths that circulated the ancient world at the time Jesus was born. Rome itself was believed to have been founded by Romulus and Remus, twin sons of Mars and the mortal Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin (priestess of the goddess Vesta).

Mark joined the other writers of the New Testament who made it a point to distinguish the Christology of Jesus of Nazareth from all other sons of gods. Mark begins by demonstrating the uniqueness of Jesus’ Sonship **at His baptism**, instead of at His birth: “Then a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” (1:11). The heavens opened, the Spirit of the LORD appeared in the form of a Dove, and God spoke, declaring Jesus to be beloved and accepted by the Father. This scene stands in stark contrast to the ancient myths that describe indifference at best between divine father and demigod son; the outright rejection by the god of any son born to a mortal mother, or in some cases, open conflict and hostility between father and son.

“A demigod or demigoddess is a part-human and part-divine offspring of a deity and a human, or a human or non-human creature that is accorded divine status after death, or someone who has attained the “divine spark” (spiritual enlightenment). An immortal demigod(-dess) often has tutelary status and a religious cult following, while a mortal demigod(-dess) is one who has fallen or died, but is popular as a legendary hero in various polytheistic religions. Figuratively, it is used to describe a person whose talents or abilities are so superlative that they appear to approach being divine.” From *Wikipedia*.

Jesus Christ is unique in that He is **co-equal, and co-eternal** with His Father. Unlike the mythological sons of gods, He was, is, and always will be fully accepted as **the beloved Son** with **full rights and authority** of His Father. John confidently states the uniqueness of Jesus’ sonship with the Father in the first few verses of his Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” (John 1:1-3).

In the ancient myths, the sons of god often had to prove themselves by some great quest or miracle. So, another way that Mark seeks to distinguish his declaration of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is by Jesus’ response to **the witnesses of the demonic spirits**. In Mark 3:11-12 and 5:6-7 unclean spirits fell down at His feet and acknowledged Him as the Son of God and in both cases, Jesus refused to allow them to make him known to others. “The observation that Jesus also commands silence from those who were healed (Mk 1:43-44; 5:43; cf. 7:24) suggests the reason for this messianic secret. The Markan Jesus does not wish to be proclaimed as Son of God until it is clear his divine sonship involves not spectacular miracles but suffering and death. Hence, the secret of Jesus’ divine sonship is revealed only gradually.” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Editors Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, © 1992, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, p.773.

“² Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—⁶ because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

⁷ And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ ⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.” (Mark 9:2–10).

Mark precedes the transfiguration with Jesus’ statement that “there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” Jesus was about to reveal himself in His full power and glory to Peter, James, and John. However, beyond this private revelation, Jesus may have been referring to the coming of the **Holy Spirit at Pentecost**, or **His second coming** at the end of the age when his kingdom would be established for all to see. At the time, the world was not ready to accept the Son of God as their King and

Lord, but by the time that Mark’s Gospel was being written, the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord was being heralded throughout the Roman Empire.

The fact that Jesus took the disciples to the top of an unnamed mountain was significant to the pagan mind; specific mountains were often associated with the dwelling places of the gods and were believed to be places where humans might hear from the gods, but no mere mortal could come close to them or interact with the gods. The God of Israel had appeared to both **Moses** (Exodus 24:12–18) and **Elijah** (1 Kings 19:8–18) on mountains. So, the mountaintop was the appropriate place for the Lord to reveal His divine nature to His chosen few.

Once again, Mark takes the opportunity to distinguish Jesus’ identity as the Son of God from the mythological sons of the gods of the Greeks and Romans. As God’s only Son, Jesus’ authority and power is far above any other human being. At the same time, Mark communicates to his Jewish audience the superiority of Jesus over the Law of Moses and the Prophets, which represented the power and authority over all Jews. *The Life Application Bible Notes* say, “God’s voice exalted Jesus above Moses and Elijah as the long-awaited Messiah with full divine authority. Moses represented the law, and Elijah, the prophets. Their appearance showed Jesus as the fulfillment of both the Old Testament law and the prophetic promises.” (pp. 1638–1639).

Jesus was fully aware of the fact that after His death and resurrection, Peter, James, John, and all the rest of the Apostles would be commissioned to proclaim to the world that Jesus was Lord and Christ. Although they did not fully understand it now, His transfiguration would sustain the faith of those who believed that only through His death on the cross could Jesus show His power to save from death all those who believed in His authority as the Son of God. The disciples would become powerful **witnesses of God’s saving grace** after they had grasped this truth.

In His trial by the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:61–64), the issue of Jesus’ identity as the Son of God was raised again. The high priest asked Jesus, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Up to this point in time, Jesus commanded no one to proclaim this truth. But knowing that His execution was at hand, Jesus responded, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.” This declaration sealed Jesus’ fate. The high priest tore his clothes to show his horror and declared Jesus **guilty of blasphemy**. This was the final outrage for the Jews “And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.”

It is significant that in Mark’s Gospel that a **Roman soldier** – the person that stood closest to Jesus at the moment of His death – said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!” (Mk 15:39). It would be a foreshadowing of the impact the Gospel was about to make upon the Roman world. This centurion had witnessed the unjust

death of a righteous man by the orders of a Roman official. If this Roman could see that Jesus was no ordinary man, then it would not be long before the whole Roman world would see that Jesus Christ was truly the divine Son of God.

The underlying theme of Mark's Gospel is why the Son of God had to die.

Mark makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the only true Son of God. He records more of Jesus' **actions than His words** in order to show that Jesus has a divine power and authority that is more than the empty words of the of the pagan religions or the traditions of the Jews. Yes, Jesus had compassion on the people, but He used His miracles to convince the Jews of His divinity and to confirm his true identity as the Son of God.

Mark reveals the **righteous character of Jesus** through His miracles of forgiveness, healing, and wholeness that changed the lives of sinners. He demonstrates the divinity of Jesus by His power over nature, His ability to crush every disease, send demons to flight, and overcome death. When He rose from the dead, Jesus proved the Gospel message that he was the Son of God who forgives sinners, and gives eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Although He has all power and authority, as the Son of God, Jesus chose to **obey His Father** – even to the point of His death on the cross. He did not come as a conquering King-Messiah as the Jews expected but He came as a **servant**. As the promised Messiah, Mark shows how Jesus fulfilled prophecies by coming to earth and serving faithfully. He served people by telling them the truth about God the Father and healing them. He set the example for all those who would follow Him by giving His life as a sacrifice for sin, which is the ultimate act of service.

Mark 16:16–18, records Jesus' final message to his disciples. **He challenged them** to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation “to every creature.” **He sent them out** into the world with the promise that “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” And **He gave them courage** to believe, “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 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.”

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON FIVE

1. Explain why it is important to understand that Gospels were not intended to be read as complete biographies or comprehensive historical accounts of the life of Jesus.
2. How does Mark's Gospel appeal more to a Gentile Roman audience than to a Jewish audience?
3. Explain why it was important for Mark to distinguish the term “Son of God” from the pagan religions when referring to Jesus Christ?
4. How does the underlying theme of Mark's Gospel (why the Son of God had to die) appeal to Mark's non-Jewish readers?
5. How does the underlying theme of Mark's Gospel (why the Son of God had to die) appeal to Mark's Jewish readers?
6. Read Mark 12:29-34. The Jews had added hundreds of religious laws to the laws God gave to Moses at Sinai. By Jesus' time, there was a lot of confusion and arguments between the Jews over which laws were binding and which were not. How did Jesus' answer to this question address this issue?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 201-6

MARK PART TWO: “JESUS THE SON OF MAN”

NOTE: Parts of this lesson are taken from *This Gospel of the Kingdom* © Frederick Osborn, 2011, 2014, 2018.

Lesson Outline

- I. Jesus Calls Himself “Son of Man”
 1. Son of Man in the Old Testament
 2. Why Jesus Called Himself Son of Man

- II. Jesus and John the Baptist
 1. John the forerunner
 2. Compare the teachings of John and Jesus

- III. Jesus authenticates his ministry to the nation by his miracles

Jesus Calls Himself “Son of Man”

“The people answered Him, ‘We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’ Who is this Son of Man?’” (John 12:34)

The term “Son of Man” appears 196 times throughout the Bible. William Barclay wrote, “If we are to accept the evidence of the Gospels, here is a title of Jesus which to all intents and purposes no one uses of Jesus except himself. Clearly this is **Jesus’ self-chosen name** for himself. And equally clearly, if that be so, we are under special obligation to try to discover what he meant by it and why he used it.” (*Jesus as They Saw Him*, © 1962, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978. p.68).

Throughout most of the Old Testament, the Hebrew term translated “son of man” (*ben adam*) usually refers to **an ordinary man** – a human being, a member of the human race. In the books of Numbers, Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Jeremiah the appearances of “son of man” hold no special prophetic meaning. But that shifts suddenly in Ezekiel’s prophecies.

Of the 107 times the expression “son of man” is used in the Old Testament, 93 of those times are found in **Ezekiel**. But throughout the book “son of man” is not used as a Messianic title; it is used to underscore Ezekiel’s imperfect **human condition** in contrast with the glorious heavenly visions he was given. “Although the Lord was granting him special visions, although the Lord was giving him the privilege of transmitting God’s truth to his people, and although the Lord had picked him to fill the role of prophet-in-exile, Ezekiel was still a son of man. He was just a human being, a sinful son of Adam. It was not as priest or as pious man or as Israelite that Ezekiel was called to be the Lord’s spokesman, but as a frail mortal who brought nothing but weakness to the task.” (Kieth Bernard Kuschel, *Ezekiel*, Copyright 1994, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, p.18).

It is not until Daniel’s vision of the four great successive world Empires – Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome – that would precede the coming of the Messiah, that the title “Son of Man” takes on a greater significance than a description of a mortal man. In Daniel’s vision the world empires are characterized as savage beasts. Daniel watched as the beasts were destroyed.

“I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13–14)

The angelic messenger of Daniel’s vision interprets its meaning and reveals the identity of the **“One like the Son of Man”** to be the Messiah. “Once Daniel 7.1-13 was interpreted messianically the next step was bound to follow. The previous kingdom had been in the power of the beasts; the new power is like a son of man; it was quite inevitable that the Messiah should be thought of as this Son of Man, and so Son of Man becomes a title for the Messiah.” (William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, © 1962, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978. p.78).

In the period between the Old and New Testaments, the apocalyptic writings of the Jews grew in popularity. Reflecting their growing theology of the End of Days, these writings often referred to the coming Messiah and his kingdom. In **the Book of Enoch**, the Son of Man is portrayed as a divine, transcendent figure who

will come to earth at the end of the age to execute heavenly vengeance and judgment upon the world. Drawing from the wellsprings of the apocalyptic passages of Israel's writing prophets, this genre of Jewish literature often depicts the God of Israel being glorified through the coming of the Messiah's kingdom – a kingdom ruled by one like a son of man. In the end, salvation comes for God's people and final judgment comes upon the world forces arrayed against Him.

By the time Jesus came upon the scene, the title Son of Man was firmly established as a title for the Messiah. Although Jesus used the term "son of man" in common ways (for example, as a substitute for the first person "I"). On occasions when he was making **great claims and declarations about Himself** (as in Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:28; and Mark 10:45; John 1:15; 3:13; 6:27, 53, 62), in connection with **the glory he was to receive** (as in Matthew 17:9; 19:28; 24:30; 26:64; Mark 9:9; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 17:26, 30; 22:69; John 12:23) , and in declarations concerning His **authority to judge people** (Matthew 25:31-32; Luke 9:56; 21:36; John 5:27), He used the term Son of Man to identify Himself to the people as their long-awaited Messiah.

"The people answered Him, 'We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this Son of Man?'" (John 12:34)

In the Gospels, a totally new and unexpected use of the term Son of Man by Jesus is recorded. It was well established in Jewish thought that the Messiah would arrive on the scene in all his majestic glory and splendor. He would terrorize his enemies, judge sinners, and receive the world's recognition as the rightful ruler of great kingdom. It was incomprehensible to the crowds that followed Jesus, and even to His own disciples, that the Son of Man would be rejected by his own, suffer a humiliating arrest and beating, and then be lifted up (crucified) for the all world to see (Matthew 16:21; 17:12, 22; 20:18; 26:2, 24, 45; Mark 8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33; 14:21, 41; Luke 9:44; 18:31-32; 22:22, 48; John 3:14; 8:28).

Why Jesus Called Himself the Son of Man

In the Gospel of Mark (as in the other Gospels) it becomes clear that Jesus' preferred title for himself was Son of Man over the designation: Messiah. We are never told exactly why Jesus almost always referred to himself as the Son of Man instead of Messiah. However, if we carefully examine the established Jewish expectations for their Messiah and his kingdom, it will not be difficult to conclude that Jesus wanted to distinguish **His first coming** as the sacrificial Lamb of God,

from **His Second Coming** as the Lion of Judah who would judge the world and establish His eternal kingdom at the end of the age.

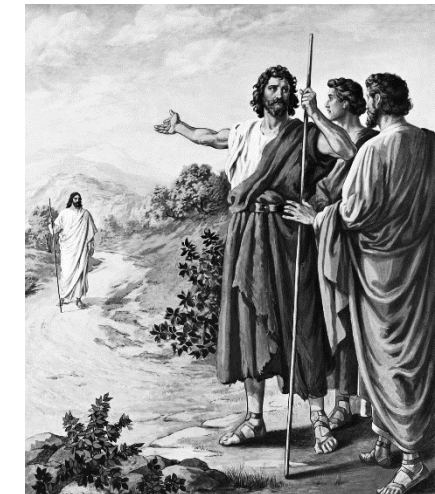
Jesus and John The Baptist

John the Baptist was at once, the last great prophet to the covenant nation of Israel and the forerunner who marked the beginning of the new covenant era of Christ. John's ministry was to prepare the people of Israel for the advent of their Messiah and to introduce them to the coming kingdom Christ would bring:

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make His paths straight."

Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins."
Matthew 3:1-6



The fact that all four Gospel writers included accounts of John the Baptist's message and ministry to the children of Israel as Christ's forerunner means that we cannot underestimate the great importance of John's mission. Matthew 3:1-16; Mark 1:1-9; Luke 3:1-17, 21, 22 & John 1:15-34 describe for us the way John prepared the nation for the coming of the Messiah. Later, Jesus would praise John to the people, saying that "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

The Jordan River played a significant part in the life of the nation of Israel. So it was no accident that God called John the Baptist to deliver His message of repentance from dead works and spiritual renewal at this place and time. Baptizing in the Jordan reminded the people of the spiritual renewal of the children of Israel when they crossed the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership (Joshua 3:5, 6). The people flocked to the Jordan River to be baptized by John because they believed him to be the messenger that God promised would prepare the way for the Messiah

to come. Expectations were high that the Messiah would come at any moment, “And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming. Says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1_b)

John’s baptism with water demonstrated the repentance, humility, and cleansing from sin that the people needed to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah. This was the beginning of the spiritual process. Jesus’ baptism with fire, fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, brought the power of the Holy Spirit to all believers to live and to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom Jesus inaugurated. Matthew Henry commented, “They who are baptized with the Holy Ghost are baptized as with fire... is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of judgment, as a spirit of burning, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heavenward. Christ says I am come to send fire...”

NOTE: Since John’s baptism was a baptism for repentance from sin, why would Jesus ask to be baptized by John? Jesus never sinned, and yet when asked by John, “are you coming to me?” Jesus would introduce His teachings about the Law in the Sermon on the Mount that He intended to “fulfill” (Greek: *pleroo*, “to make full”) the righteous requirements of the Law (Matthew 5:17). In the same way, Jesus said that He wanted to be baptized in order to “fulfill all righteousness.” By His water baptism Jesus set the example of humbly submitting to God for all who would follow after Him until the end of the age. When He emerged from the waters of the Jordan River, Jesus set out on a new phase of His ministry that would involve the public proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, and the private teaching and training of His disciples, preparing them for that day when He would return to the Father, and send the Holy Spirit to His church to lead them and guide them into righteousness until His return at the end of the age.

When we Compare John the Baptist’s teaching on true repentance (Matt. 3:8-10; Luke 3:8-16) with Jesus’ teachings about entering and living as a citizen of the kingdom from His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-27), we clearly see

that both John the Baptist and Jesus called people to much more than words or ritual for repentance:

John the Baptist

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:8-10 (NIV)

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Luke 3:8-16 (NIV)

Jesus

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:13-27 (NIV)

When we carefully study what Jesus and the forerunner, John the Baptist said about salvation, we discover that they both taught it is not enough just to say a prayer asking for God to forgive your sins and go through the rite of baptism to declare yourself "Christian". A citizen of the kingdom of God must also demonstrate the genuineness of their conversion by bearing fruit in keeping with that conversion. Does that mean that salvation is not the free gift of God? No. What it means is that salvation, if it is genuine, will include repentance and a transformed life. Jesus told His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." John 15:16

"The cross in the Christian's life does something radical. The more you know and understand what God was doing for you – and what the alternative was if He hadn't – the more impossible it is to live your life unto yourself. It's a spiritual impossibility. Once you understand the cross, a selfish, self-centered life is simply no longer an option."
Henry Blackaby

Jesus Authenticates His Ministry to The Nation by His Miracles

From the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom. He offered Himself as the Son of God, Messiah, and Son of Man that the nation of Israel was waiting and hoping for. Once He stepped into the public arena, Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15).

Matthew pointed out that "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." (Matthew 9:35). In His sermons Jesus taught that God's people must acknowledge His authority and accept Him as the One who fulfilled the Old Testament's messianic prophecies. **Today's evangelists, missionaries, and preachers should follow Jesus' example.** Jesus was and is the prophetic fulfillment of the Old Testament's promise of the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. Those who reject Jesus, will continue down the wrong pathways marked out for them by the traditions of men or the teachings of false religions. During the early period of His ministry, Christ told very few parables, but spoke plainly in His sermons. After it became clear that the religious leaders would never accept His authority, and that the masses would never commit themselves to Him, Jesus spoke to the masses in parables, and let His miracles speak for themselves.

When we carefully study Matthew chapters 8-11, we discover how Jesus used His miracles as a visible stamp to authenticate Himself as One who spoke with divine authority. Not everyone who heard Jesus' teachings and witnessed His miracles reacted to Him and to His message in the same way. Those who were in greatest need of God's love and redemption reacted with **the greatest love**; while those who were wrapped in the robes of religious self-righteousness, often reacted with the **greatest hate**. Jesus rebuked the hard-heartedness of those who refused to forgive sinners and said after forgiving the sinful woman who tearfully worshiped Him, "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." (Luke 7:47).

Everywhere Jesus went, people came to Him that were afflicted with every kind of sickness and disease. Along with those who were tormented by sins, came the demon-possessed, epileptics, the blind, deaf and dumb, and the paralytics. Jesus never refused those who desperately sought Him; He healed them all. As the multitudes continued to come forward, Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37, 38; Luke 10:2; & John 4:35-37). The crowds who followed Jesus may have been impressed by His miracles, but they wavered when it came time to totally commit themselves to Him

and many fell away, not wanting to bear the cost of following Jesus unconditionally (Luke 9:51-62; 14:25-33; John 6:60-66). Modern-day evangelists, preachers, missionaries, and ministry leaders should beware of those who only seek Jesus to be healed of some sickness, or to receive some kind of miracle in their life but will not fully commit themselves to Him as the Lord of their life.

Jesus faced the greatest opposition to His ministry not from those who were on the outside, but His greatest enemies were those who considered themselves the religious “watchdogs” over the people. In the crowds that followed Jesus were the scribes, Pharisees, and the priests who were the keepers of Temple worship in Jerusalem who were the self-appointed “holy men” and the religious police appointed to make sure everyone in Judea knew their place in society and kept the Jewish religion. All but a handful of these religious leaders openly resisted Jesus’ influence over the multitudes that came and listened to Him preaching the gospel of the kingdom and be healed. Jesus’ confrontations with these religious leaders over their misinterpretations of the Law and the Sabbath became increasingly open and hostile. Although they saw His many miracles and knew the Scriptures concerning the coming of the Messiah, they still demanded of Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you” (Matthew 12:38). Compounding their unbelief was their blasphemous accusation that Jesus used Satanic power to cast out demons (Matthew 9:33). It was in this context that Jesus began to teach in parables.

Missionaries, evangelists, preachers, and teachers are often surprised when they face opposition to their ministry from other Christian leaders. Those who are faithful to the Lord’s teachings and stay within the bounds of sound Christian doctrines, will not be welcomed by those who have strayed from the truth. When we study the Epistles of Paul and the other writers of the later New Testament, we will quickly discover that large portions of those letters were written in response to some kind of false teaching that was creeping into the church. Paul often reminded believers that, “. . .the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:3-5)

This is reason why it is so important for anyone planning to go on the mission field to know the Scriptures well, to be rooted and grounded in sound Christian doctrines, and to be ready and able to give a defense for their faith: “But 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, with meekness and fear...” (1 Peter 3:15).

Discouragement and disappointment often set in when expectations and high hopes of the missionary for a positive response to their ministry do not materialize.

Missionaries often have to face the hard reality that the multitudes and the religious leaders rarely respond to direct calls for submission to Jesus’ authority. Those who come to evangelistic meetings seeking signs or miracles rarely respond to calls to commit themselves to the Lordship of Jesus if it means giving up their old way of life. Jesus predicted that only a few would choose the “narrow way” and come to Him (Matthew 7:13, 14). So, He spoke in parables so that “outsiders” and “the rest” who refused to believe would not be able to hear or understand the mysteries of the kingdom that are only for Jesus’ disciples to hear and understand. The Gospel accounts of the unbelief of Israel’s leaders anticipated the nation’s ultimate rejection of Christ, and that would lead to His death on the cross.

Mark 2:23-28 describes another pivotal moment in Jesus’ ministry. It opens with another confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees over the Sabbath. Jesus ends this confrontation, declaring Himself “Lord of the Sabbath.” From there Jesus enters a synagogue and heals a man on the Sabbath (3:1-6), once again demonstrating His authority over the Sabbath. But instead of accepting Him, the religious leaders wanted to kill Him, the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Note: Luke 19:14, 27; & Luke 20:14-16). This should be another lesson for those who argue that miracle gifts are necessary for evangelism. The truth is miracles will not convince those who refuse to believe.

The third chapter of Mark also contains Jesus’ rebuke of the leaders of the Jewish nation who accused Him of being in league with the devil (Mark 3:20-30). Matthew 12:28 notes that they also demanded another sign from Him at this time to prove His authority to speak to the nation. Jesus’ words in Matthew 12:22-45 echo those of John the Baptist when John warned the leaders, “even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree” (Matthew 3:7-10). After all that Jesus had said and done in the presence of the multitudes, it was obvious that one more sign would not convince them that He was indeed the promised Messiah. Only one last sign would be offered to the nation of Israel:

“He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.’”
Matthew 12:39-42

Those who rely upon miracle gifts to promote their ministry and convince the masses that the Gospel is true forget the fact the Jesus gave His greatest sign and worked His greatest miracle by an empty blood-stained cross, and an empty tomb. What more does anyone need to be convinced of the truth? “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear...Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:32, 33, 36

Study Questions for Lesson Six

1. In what way did John the Baptist prepare the nation of Israel for the coming of the Messiah?
2. How did John the Baptist’s teachings compare with Jesus?
3. In what context did Jesus begin to teach in parables?
4. What role did miracles play in Jesus’ ministry?
5. What can modern-day evangelists, missionaries, and ministry leaders learn from the rejection of Jesus Christ by His own people?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 201-7

LUKE PART ONE: “THE MESSIANIC HOPE”

Lesson Outline

- I. Introduction to the Gospel of Luke
- II. The Messiah’s Mission to the Jews
 - a. The Messiah’s Mission to the Multitudes
- III. Son of Man in Luke’s Gospel

Introduction To the Gospel of Luke (Luke – Author)

Approximate Date Written:

A.D. 60

Original and Primary Audiences:

Theophilus, "one who loves God", Hellenistic Jews, and all believers.

Purpose:

To present an accurate, orderly, account of the life of Christ; and to present Christ as the perfect Son of Man and Savior.

Context:

Luke was a Greek physician and believer (Colossians 4:14). He was the only Gentile author of a New Testament book. Luke was a close friend and traveling companion of Paul. He also wrote the book of Acts to compliment his Gospel.

Because Luke’s primary audience were those who embraced a Hellenistic worldview, he stresses Jesus’ humanity in relationships with people. At the same time, Luke emphasizes the power of Jesus’ miracles, and the supernatural. Luke’s gospel emphasized Jesus’ sacrifice upon the cross for the redemption of mankind as opposed to the Greeks’ belief that man’s reason and science could save him.

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account

for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:1-4

Luke’s Gospel is a bridge between the **Jewish Messiah and Gentile culture** in the same way that Matthew’s Gospel is a bridge between the Jewish Old Testament and the radical new concept of the kingdom of God that Jesus presented. Luke wrote for Gentiles who were looking for a way to reconcile Jewish ideal of the Messianic Son of God/Son of Man with the Greek’s humanistic ideal of Man as the measure of all things.

Dr. Luke is named three times in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 1:23-24). He addressed his gospel to a man named *Theóphilos* (Greek, "loved of God"). We do not know for certain if Theophilus was a Gentile seeker or already a believer, but we can reasonably assume from the text that he had received some instruction about Jesus Christ. But given the tremendous effort that researching and writing this gospel must have been, it also seems clear that Luke did not write for Theophilus alone, but for any “loved of god” that were seeking the truth about Jesus Christ.

Luke’s effort to present an **orderly and scholarly**, historical account of Jesus’ earthly ministry would have appealed to the Greek mind. At the same time, the Greeks were a proud race and believed themselves culturally superior to the Hebrews. So they would have questioned whether they really belonged with this racially mixed and heavily persecuted alien community that was surrounded by a much larger and stronger Gentile world that was shaped at least in part by Hellenism. At the time this was written, Gentile Christians may have felt out of place in an originally Jewish movement, and many would have questioned why there was such a strong opposition from the Jews towards Christians.

Hellenism literally means, “to speak or make Greek”, but implies a much broader meaning: “to act in a Greek way”. Therefore, a Hellenistic Jew would be a Jewish person who spoke, thought, and acted in a Greek way and was less concerned with the strict adherence to Mosaic – and especially Pharisaic – laws.

In the first century, Gentiles were being welcomed into the community of faith and there was no attempt by believers to remove faith in Jesus Christ from Judaism, but history tells us that as time went on and the numbers of Gentile believers overwhelmed the numbers of Jewish believers. Eventually, the split between non-believing Jews and the Gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus became irreconcilable. Eventually, Jewish believers in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) were forced out of Judaism while Gentile believers in Jesus Christ gladly divorced themselves from legalistic Judaism. This rift exists to this day, and in times past, it

caused Christians, whose numbers and power rose rapidly throughout the remnants of the Roman Empire, to ignore or even deny **the Jewish roots** of the Christian faith. It has only been in more recent times that Christians in search of the historical Jesus, have returned to serious study of the Jewish context of the Gospels.

We know that Luke was trained as a physician and traveled with Paul. He wrote the Book of Acts as well as the Gospel that bears his name. Luke’s gospel was written at a time when the church was still primarily Jewish, but with a rapidly growing Gentile minority. Luke may have been a Gentile, but because of his training and background, he was most likely a **Hellenistic Jew**. But either way, his training as a doctor would have meant he was familiar with everything Greek and his long relationship with **the Apostle Paul** would have put him in contact with the Apostles and other early church leaders. So Luke being a Hellenistic, Jewish Christian, would have made him uniquely situated to present a Jewish Messiah to Greeks wanting to know who Jesus Christ was.

The Messiah’s Mission to the Jews

The Jews had failed in their mission to bring **salvation to the nations**, to live as a **holy people**, and to **glorify the God of Israel** in all the earth because they had forgotten that those were the reasons why they were chosen in the first place. They had lost touch with the One who had created them. God had to send John the Baptist to prepare the nation for the Messiah’s arrival, warning them, “...do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:9-10).

In order to fulfill His mission to the Jewish nation, the Messiah would have to **correct their distorted view** of themselves as God’s chosen people. The Lord had given them the Law, circumcision, the memorial feasts, His divine interventions, the temple and its sacrifices, the great prophets of old, and righteous leaders like Moses, King David, Daniel, and the forerunner to the Messiah, John the Baptist. But all of these were given to make God’s people a distinct and holy people – a holy nation, a royal priesthood. Israel was supposed to minister to the Gentile nations surrounding them and to the ends of the earth. Instead of being separated unto God for His purposes, the Jews turned all of these blessings inward and insulated themselves from the nations and excluded those who needed God’s saving grace the most.

Beginning with the lost sheep of Israel, but always looking beyond to the nations, the Messiah opened the doors of grace and mercy to sinners and openly

confronted the religious gatekeepers that slammed the doors shut to the Lord's flock:

“Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” (Luke 5:29–32).

From the first moment that Jesus stepped into public ministry He challenged the religious leaders' interpretations of Mosaic Law. The confrontations became more intense and boiled over after Jesus entered the temple grounds in Jerusalem and **overturned the tables of the moneychangers**. Jesus posed a direct threat to the self-righteous leaders of the Jews that elevated their religious traditions and oral interpretations of Mosaic Law to be equal to God's laws. Jesus told them, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.” (Luke 11:38–39).

Luke 11:39-52 (also Matthew 23) records Jesus' most devastating indictment of the Jews' **corrupt shepherds**. Jesus publicly exposed their hypocrisies. In this chapter and throughout the Gospels, Jesus uncovered those religious leaders that intimidated God's people and used fear and threats to force them to obey the rules they made for others but did not follow themselves. Jesus told the crowds to obey all that those who sat in Moses' seat said, “but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matthew 23:1-3).

What irritated the Jewish religious authorities the most was Jesus' ability to hold up a perfect mirror in front of them and force them to see the truth that their efforts to obey the Sabbath rules and regulations, were not honoring God, as they told themselves and others they were. But they made a show of righteousness only to make themselves look good on the outside, while on the inside they were full of lusts for power, money, and self-glorification.

Jesus' rebukes cut to the hearts of those religious leaders who were fleecing the poor and faithful sinners who came to them for atonement: “You blind fools!” Jesus said, “Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?” (Matthew 23:17). Every priest swore an oath to accept and uphold their responsibility to execute their duties according to the Law of Moses. Jesus warned them that they could not escape **personal accountability** if they just went through ritualistic

motions in front of God's altars: “Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.” The Messiah's Father would not tolerate those who were making a mockery of the temple and its services.

Jesus publicly mocked the Pharisees in a way that only a few Jews would have had the courage to do in private, saying their unhealthy obsession with the details of the law was like straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel. But these blind guides and hypocrites did not fool God with their righteous posturing in front of the people. He saw right through their self-righteous façade and called them what they truly were: “whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean... on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

Isaiah had prophesied (2:2-3) that in the great messianic age to come, that “the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains,” and that all nations shall flow into Jerusalem. At that time, many peoples shall come from near and far and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.”

After their return from exile, the Jews were looking forward to the day the Messiah would be revealed and then, “out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” However, Jesus saw how the hypocrisies and religious pretenses of Jerusalem's teachers of the law and the Pharisees, were keeping the nations away from Jerusalem, where the Temple, the earthly dwelling place of God was located. The religious leaders of the Jews managed to win over a few converts, but they were filling them with their false doctrines of **self-righteousness and salvation by works**.

In the middle of all the rebukes in Luke 11, Jesus chided those religious hypocrites for their false expressions of piety in honoring the prophets of old. But Jesus would not let them off the hook so easily:

“Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’ that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the

temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.” (11:47–51).

They were just as guilty as their ancestors because prophets, wise men, and scribes were being sent to them, calling them to repent and turn from their evil ways, but “some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city...” And although they did not know it at that moment, before too long they would be guilty of committing their greatest sin: they would **shed the blood of their Savior**, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus knew from the beginning that Jerusalem, “the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her” would reject Him; they were unwilling to let go of their self-righteous pride, their hypocrisies, their precious traditions, and their power to submit to one that God the Father sent to them. Therefore, Jesus told them, “Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

The Messiah’s Mission to The Multitude

“And 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, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.” (Luke 6:17–19).

Jesus’ mission to the Jews was not only to their religious leaders; it extended to the multitude that followed Him everywhere He went. “And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.” (Mark 6:34).

In His public sermons and teachings, Jesus sought to **correct the distorted teachings** on the Messiah and His kingdom to come. Jesus’ ministry to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel took Him from one end of Roman Palestine to the other, but **Jerusalem and its temple** would be the scene for Jesus’ most dangerous confrontations with the Jews. On more than one occasion, the Jewish authorities sought to arrest and execute Jesus for blasphemy for what He said and did in or near the Temple Mount. However, as long as the crowds

believed that Jesus was or might be the long-awaited Messiah, the authorities dared not to arrest Him.

To understand why the Messiah’s teachings were such a threat to the authorities, and why in the end the multitude abandoned Him, it is essential to understand what the **Jewish expectations** were for their coming Messiah and the part they played in their rejection of Jesus.

On the surface, the land promised to the Jews seemed peaceful and bountiful. The rich soil, fresh water, and the sea continued to provide all that was needed for the people to prosper. In His teachings, Jesus often referred to the natural beauty of the land: the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, the abundance of the good soil and the fruitfulness of the vines and well-tended gardens. But below the surface, the inhabitants of Palestine were seething with anger and bitterness between warring factions that all wanted to control the wealth of the land and its people. This rivalry between the Jews and the foreign factions of Romans and Herodians was traced back to a time long before Jesus was born. The deep resentments of Rome and the Herodian aristocracy by the Jews were rooted in their **hopes and dreams for a savior-messiah** who would destroy their oppressors and usher in a new golden age for a restored Davidic Kingdom with a glorious Jerusalem as its capitol.

The Old Testament contains numerous prophecies that pointed ahead to the coming Messiah and His glorious kingdom which would be established at the end of the age. In the so-called **400 silent years** between Malachi and John the Baptist, apocalyptic writers elaborated upon the Old Testament prophecies and added fuel to the fiery visions of judgment on the wicked and the rewards of the righteous that awaited all in the Last Days.

By the time that Jesus began His mission to the Jewish nation, the anticipated arrival of the Messiah had reached a fever pitch. They believed the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem at the head of a righteous army, strike down all their foreign occupiers, and establish an earthly kingdom greater than David’s. They saw the wealth of nations pouring into Jerusalem and the city with its temple rebuilt to surpass its former glory. But lost in their dreams of glory, religious elitism, and national pride were other important prophecies that Jesus, the Messiah would have to fulfill. They were also blind to the huge prophetic gap that existed between those prophecies that would be fulfilled at His first incarnation and those prophecies that would be fulfilled at His Second Coming at the end of the church age.

Daniel’s prophecy of the **“Seventy Weeks”** (9:24-27) alluded to the fact that the Messiah would have to be “cut off” and Jerusalem would suffer the humiliation of “the abomination of desolation” before the miraculous arrival of the kingdom of heaven that would shake the whole earth:

“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:1-3

Important aspects of Jesus’ teaching ministry were to **correct the distortions** of the prophecies concerning the Messianic age to come and bring clarity to the prophets’ visions concerning the **suffering and sacrifice** of the Messiah.

Contrary to what the Jews believed, Jesus taught that the messianic kingdom would **not** be a worldly, political kingdom like David’s kingdom was. At one point, the crowds following Jesus wanted to crown Him “king of the Jews”, but Jesus refused. Just hours before His arrest and execution, Jesus told His disciples, “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:28-30). When asked by Pilate if the charges of sedition against Him were true, Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” (John 18:36). The masses turned on Jesus because He refused to establish the Davidic kingdom the Jews wanted and expected.

Another reason why Jesus was rejected as the Messiah by the Jews was because He taught without apology that God does not confine Himself to an earthly temple. The Jews were terribly offended when Jesus pointed out the obvious fact that the temple in Jerusalem was not the actual dwelling place of God on the earth, but was only a symbolic representation of the true, heavenly tabernacle that was not made by human hands (John 2:19-20; Mark 14:57-58).

After the returning exiles rebuilt the ruined temple in Jerusalem (although not to its former glory) they dreamed of the day when the Messiah would come and build a temple that would be grander and more glorious than Solomon’s temple. In the centuries before Jesus arrived, the Jews often had to protect and defend the temple from being defiled by Gentile rulers of Palestine. They believed that the temple would be God’s dwelling place on the earth and all the nations would come

to worship Him there. Jesus’ declaration that “in this place there is One greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6) startled them. In the end, the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah because it was incomprehensible to them that anyone or anything could be greater than the physical location where the shekinah glory of God dwelt.

The years of exile and the constant struggle against the Gentile rulers over Palestine had left the Jews with little or no incentive to embrace the Gentiles as welcomed neighbors in the kingdom of heaven. The Jews relished their place as “a holy people to the LORD your God” chosen to be His “special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deuteronomy 14:2 KJV).

Although Jesus specifically instructed His disciples not to evangelize the Gentiles before His mission to the Jewish nation was complete (Matthew 10:5), Jesus did not refuse to minister to the few Gentiles that came to Him for help. And He did not fail to hold up their faithful responses as examples of the faith the Jews should have been showing the One who had been sent by the Father to deliver them (Matthew 8:5-13).

The Messiah’s encounter with a woman of Canaan in Matthew 15:21-28 reveals the Jewish attitude towards the Gentiles at that time. Jesus had come to a Gentile region for some time away from the growing crowds of seekers in Galilee and Judea. When He was alone with His disciples, this woman who came from the region of Tyre and Sidon sought out Jesus and pleaded with Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” Notice that this Gentile woman addressed Jesus using the Messianic title “Son of David” which was something few of the Jews dared to do back in Jerusalem in the presence of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. So, not only had this woman heard about Jesus, but she also heard that many believed He was the Messiah prophesied about in the Hebrew Scriptures.

No doubt, to test His disciples, Jesus did not immediately answer her. So, His disciples responded, and urged Jesus to send her away, which was typical of what the Jews would have done with this Gentile woman (note also, John 4:5-27). Jesus’ answer that He was not sent “**except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**” was intended to test the woman’s sincerity. Her desperate and humble reply revealed her true faith in His authority to heal her daughter. So, Jesus answered her (for His disciples to witness) “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And He healed her daughter.

This encounter with the Canaanite woman, should have taken His disciples back to the day when Jesus stood in the synagogue in Nazareth, read Isaiah 61:1-2a to the assembly, and announced the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah was “fulfilled” in Him (Luke 4:16-30). This statement by Jesus caused some to marvel “at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” But knowing their thoughts – that Jesus of Nazareth should minister only to His own - caused Jesus to push the

issue further: “He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’” Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.’” This statement offended those in the synagogue that heard it. But the offense of Jesus’ hometown neighbors quickly turned from offense to seething anger when Jesus pushed the issue, telling them, “many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

Many of the Jews in Roman Palestine were quite willing to consider Jesus a great Rabbi or the Messiah of the Jewish nation, but not the Savior of the Gentiles also. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that His Father’s mission, which He would commission them to complete, would include the Gentiles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” (Matthew 28:19). This conflict over the salvation of the Gentiles would continue in the early days of the church and was well-documented in the book of Acts and in several of the Epistles. The inability of the Jews to extend the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles apart from **circumcision, obedience to the Law of Moses**, and conforming to **the oral laws** of the Jewish traditionalists was one more reason why the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah.

The coming of a Messiah from **King David’s seed** had been prophesied long before David was anointed king. The expected deliverer from the tribe of Judah was first prophesied by Jacob when that patriarch bestowed his final blessings upon his sons from whom the twelve tribes of Israel would emerge. Jacob announced to all present that Judah had been chosen to receive pre-eminence over the other tribes: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” (Genesis 49:10). In the centuries following Isaiah and the other prophets of God, the Jewish apocalyptists embellished prophecies concerning the “Son of David” like:

Isaiah

- 7:14-16 The coming of a messiah out of David’s seed: He would be born of a virgin and would be “God with us”
- 9:1, 6, 7 The coming of a messiah out of David’s seed: The Messiah would be from Galilee, He will rule with perfect wisdom and justice, and He will reign forever from David’s throne.

- 11:1-5 The coming of a messiah out of David’s seed: The Messiah will come from the line of David and will be a perfect King and Judge
- 11:6-12 The restoration of paradise: the Messianic kingdom be characterized by harmony with nature as well as among men.

By the time Jesus set out on His mission to the Jews, the idea of a “suffering Servant” and “Lamb of God” who would surrender His life as an atonement for the sins of the world was completely incomprehensible to them. Even Jesus’ own disciples were having difficulty understanding Him when He told them plainly that He would be taken and slaughtered before their eyes but would rise again after three days as a sign to the world. “But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.” (Luke 18:34).

However, the prophecies concerning the Messiah’s suffering and rejection by His own people were there to see for all who had eyes to see them. After the events of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection occurred, these prophecies suddenly came into focus. In retrospect, the character of the Messiah as **gentle and meek** (Isaiah 42:1-4), the **brutality inflicted upon** the Messiah, and His mission to **save from sins** both the Jews and Gentiles (Isaiah 50:6; 52:13-15; 53:1-12) were all revealed. The fulfillment of these prophecies became the pillars upon which the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus was preached to the world.

Luke 9:11-17 (also Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:35–44; John 6:1–14) says a **“great multitude”** followed Jesus around the sea of Galilee because they saw His miracles which He performed on those who were diseased. Jesus miraculously fed about five thousand followers; then John adds that those who saw the sign, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Jesus knew they were about to make Him king (Messiah), but He slipped away from the crowds before they could put their plan into action. By the time the crowds caught up with Jesus, He was on the opposite side of the Sea, teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Jesus had been condemned by the Pharisees and religious leaders in Jerusalem for exposing the hypocrisy of those who outwardly appeared upright and holy but inwardly were full of corruption and greed. In Galilee, Jesus reprimanded the crowds that were chasing after Him for the wrong motives: they were seeking food for their stomachs, not the “true bread from heaven” which is Christ Himself. Jesus told them, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” (John 6:27).

At first, it seemed that the crowds were listening to what Jesus was saying about Himself being the bread from heaven, but as soon as He stated plainly, “I am

the bread of life” and that He had come to give them life in the Spirit, but not to feed their flesh, the crowds began to complain about Him and doubt Him. Then Jesus pushed the crowds even further by saying, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (6:54-56).

The Jews understood immediately that Jesus was speaking figuratively – otherwise He would have been promoting some kind of Paganistic cannibalism which was strictly prohibited by Mosaic Law (Leviticus 17:10, 11). But this message was none-the-less shocking to the Jews because it was clear that He was saying that his life – not the Mosaic Law and traditions they had been following - had to become their source of life. But they could not accept this idea; they could not let go of what the scribes, Pharisees, and teachers of the law had pounded into their heads from birth. But this statement was no different from what Jesus had said to the Pharisee Nicodemus: “You must be born again.”

In the end, the Messiah’s mission to the Jews failed to reach them. Of course, this was prophesied from the beginning, and the Father knew that His Son would not be embraced by His chosen people. “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (6:64-66).

Questions for Lesson Seven

1. Consider the confrontations that Jesus had with the religious authorities over their traditions. How does it help you to expect resistance to the preaching of the Gospel where you minister?
2. How does Jesus’ response to those who opposed Him help you to develop a strategy to respond to them?
3. Jesus was not attempting to introduce a whole new religion to the Jews but was only trying to bring correction. However, most missionaries today, are presenting an entirely new message to their audience. How does this fact effect your presentation of the Gospel?

4. Jesus was often able to be rougher in His criticisms of the religious leaders because they were all from the same religious family with Jesus. How should someone from the outside present the Gospel? (Note Paul’s sermon in Acts 17:16-34).
5. Jesus scolded the religious leaders of the Jews for shutting the doors of the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces when they should have been welcoming all those who were seeking sanctuary from the devil and his schemes. In what ways do all false religions share in shutting the doors of salvation in the faces of those who need it most?
6. A large part of Jesus’ teaching/preaching ministry was dedicated to adjusting the Messianic expectations of the multitudes that followed Him. How important is it to the presentation of the Gospel today that the evangelist, missionary, or preacher understands the expectations of those who come to hear the Gospel?
7. What is the result when the modern evangelist over-promises signs, wonders, healing, and various miracles to the crowds of unbelievers who show up for a gospel meeting?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 201-8

LUKE PART TWO: “JESUS, THE TEACHER”

Lesson Outline

- I. The Message of Luke’s Gospel for today
- II. Christology in Luke's Gospel
 1. The Christological Titles for Jesus in Luke
 2. Jesus is called “Lord”

The Message of Luke’s Gospel for Today

As was noted in Lesson Six, in all four Gospels, Jesus uses the term, “Son of Man”, to refer to Himself. And there is nothing new or different from the other Gospels in the way Luke uses the term. The Jews who heard this term “Son of Man” would immediately remember the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Daniel’s prophecy speaks of a figure like “a son of man” who comes with the clouds of heaven; he appears before God and is given everlasting sovereign power and dominion (Note Revelation 1:7 “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be!”).

However, the term, “Son of Man” would invoke a totally different meaning to those in Luke’s primary audience who were fully immersed in the Hellenistic mindset. To the Gentiles, the fact that Jesus so clearly identifies Himself with the “son of man” of Jewish prophecy, at the same time He is being rejected by the Jews, adds even more drama and mystery to why the Jewish people rejected Him as their Messiah. The Jews were expecting a conquering King to come and deliver

them from their Roman oppressors, but Jesus’ mission as the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53 was something the Jews looking for the “son of man” from Daniel’s prophecy could not comprehend. Luke makes it clear that Jesus knew that His own people would reject Him and those who believed in Him:

“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.” Luke 6:22

“And he said, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.’” Luke 9:22

"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." Luke 9:44

But the Son of Man being rejected by His own people and led away as a Lamb for the slaughter was not something even His disciples were ready to accept:

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’” Matthew 16:21-22

The Greeks practically worshiped the human body as a thing of beauty; beauty to them was the very essence of virility. They believed circumcision was nothing other than a gross mutilation of the body, and their image of the glorious human form would have been insulted by the image of Christ mutilated on the cross – for not only did the Greeks make their gods human-like, but actually glorified the human body in their gods. Greek philosophy promoted a perfect balance of mind and body in *meden agan*, (“nothing in excess”), and the pursuit of *Kalos k'agathos* (the 'beautiful and good'). Luke’s Jesus said to all of them:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? Luke 9:23-25

Luke was presenting – either consciously or unconsciously – Jesus, the Son of Man as **the measure of all things** as opposed to the Greek concept of the ideal

Man as the measure of all things. Whether it is the individual, or humanity as a collective whole, the Hellenists believed that man is the center of the Universe and that the perfect, ideal human specimen **represents divine perfection**. Greek artists and sculptors idealized the human form; athletes performed in the nude; their theologians incorporated human attributes such as power, speed, and beauty into the gods of Mount Olympus. Greek theatre placed man at center stage; the chorus of Sophocles' Antigone sang out again and again, "Many are the awesome and the awful creations of the universe, but there is nothing as awesome and awful as man". Indeed, the sum total of Hellenism cried out, "Man is the measure of all things".

The Gospel of Luke has a very different idea to bequeath to the world. Jesus, the Son of Man (as opposed to the Greek humanistic ideal) is the measure of all things, and the center of the universe. Jesus' characteristics of compassion, unconditional love, patience, loving kindness and truth are the embodiment of *Kalos k'agathos*. If the Greeks created gods in man's image, then Luke holds up the man, Jesus of Nazareth as the perfect the human being – the divine Son of God, which all human beings must strive to emulate.

Self-knowledge was the motivating force of the Greek humanist philosophers. The essence of the Socratic maxim "**Know thyself**" means that a man's salvation is by knowledge. The Greeks believed that the highest endeavor of any human being was the cultivation of the mind and the control of the body; this was the aim of the wise man and the philosopher. The mind can apprehend truth, but the bodily senses can hobble the soul from acquiring knowledge. Therefore the mind must be freed as much as possible from the body. The person who succeeds in controlling the body and cultivating the mind will lay hold on truth and partake of immortality so far as that is possible. The Greeks believed that the greatest source of the prevalent confusion, conflict, fear, and darkness in the human soul was **ignorance**, which includes the failure to realize how little we know about anything, in the true sense of the word "know". The definite meaning, therefore, to be attached to the maxim "know thyself" is not only to lay hold on truth, but also to realize the extent of one's own ignorance or limitations.

Luke presents Jesus as the **Divine Teacher**, which would have appealed to the Greeks, but His salvation was not in self-knowledge – it comes by grace through faith. Jesus made it clear that He did not come to set men free from ignorance through His teachings, but to forgive them; and through that forgiveness, the confusion, conflict, fear, and darkness of the human soul comes to an end. When the disciples of John asked Jesus if He was the One who came to save the Nation, Jesus answered not with words or arguments, but with actions: "So He replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured,

the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Luke 7:22) And shortly afterwards, Jesus forgave a prostitute of her sins, saying, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." (Luke 7:50)

The words of the Greek philosophers filled the library shelves and echoed in the corridors of higher learning all around the Roman world, but Luke put all of human wisdom in perspective when quoted Jesus, saying,

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26

It is no different today. Christian missionaries and evangelists preach a Gospel that says, the philosophies, technologies, and the sciences of men are powerless to save mankind – and in fact often do as much harm as good. But to know Christ and His word is Luke's prescription for what ails the human soul and keeps it bound in the darkness. Paul said it best when he wrote:

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead." Philippians 3:10-11

Luke records how Jesus proved again and again through His acts of compassion and unconditional love for the lost sheep of humanity all around Him, that "...the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Luke's gospel challenges the humanist skeptics of the supernatural even to this day. Those who are seeking sinless, rational, and scientific knowledge as a means for mankind's redemption are unable to rationalize the sacrifice of the sinless Son of Man for the salvation of humanity. Paul understood them, and wrote:

"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

CHRISTOLOGY IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

The simplest definition of Christology is “the study of the person of Jesus Christ, otherwise known as Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus became known as the Christ from the many references to Him as “Christ” recorded in the Gospels (the Greek term for Messiah is *Christos*). Christology is concerned primarily with Christ's dual identities – both human and divine – which were revealed in His statements, and in the work which He accomplished while living on earth.

Christology is an important study because it leads to a better understanding of Christian doctrine. Christian missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and teachers often engage with those of other faiths (or no faith) over Christ's existence and how His words and actions relate to eternal salvation. Christian charity among the non-Christian nations, and the purpose of Christian missionaries' efforts to bring the message of salvation in Christ alone will always be challenged. Therefore, our motives for works of compassion and why what we believe will always need to be effectively defended.

Apart from a clear understanding of Christology an effective defense of the Christian faith is impossible. Knowing and understanding who Christ is establishes and strengthens the church's message to the world. Although Christology is considered its own study, it is related to and supported by the studies of salvation (soteriology), the Christian Church (ecclesiology), and the Trinity being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Trinitarianism).

The Christological Titles for Jesus in Luke

All the writers of the Gospel narratives employed certain names and titles that Jesus and others used to convey His divine nature and the meaning of His life and ministry on earth. Gospels use over 100 titles for Jesus. Luke uses most of the Christological titles that are found in the other Gospels:

- **Christ/Messiah** – The word *Messiah* (*Christ* in the Greek) comes from the Hebrew verb which means “to anoint”. Jesus the Christ fulfilled the anointed offices of prophet, priest, and king.
- **Son of God** – The term indicates the special status Jesus holds with His Father. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus is equal in power and authority to His Father.
- **Son of Man** – Jesus used this title most often to refer to Himself. The title, Son of Man, highlighted Jesus' humility, and the humanity of the One who would be rejected by his own and then be killed.
- **Son of David** – One of the strongest Messianic titles for the Jews. The Messiah must be a direct descendant of King David. The Messiah was prophesied to be the one who would establish David's throne forever.

- **King of Jews** – Another strong Messianic title. It is related to the prophecy that God would establish the throne of David forever.

What is probably the most important Christological title used for Jesus in all the New Testament is the title, Lord. Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as Lord of all nations (not just of the Jews). Luke uses the title “Lord”, (Greek, *kyrios*) over 100 times, mostly referring to Jesus. He describes the births and infancy of Jesus and His forerunner, John the Baptist with greater detail than the other Gospels (120 verses; Matthew comes in second with only 43).

Luke includes in his narrative the infant Jesus being presented in the Temple in Jerusalem eight days after His birth, according to the Law of Moses. The elderly Simeon, “a just and devout man”, upon seeing Jesus, prays,

“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation
Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.” (2:29-32)

Near the end of Luke's Gospel, the risen Christ appears on the road out of Jerusalem to two of those who followed Him until His death. After revealing Himself to them, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (24:27), they returned to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem who confirmed “The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon! [Peter]” (24:34).

The last time the resurrected Christ appears, He reminds His disciples that **it is written in their Scriptures** how the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; that repentance and the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all the nations. The last words of Jesus that Luke records in his Gospel are: “Behold, I send the Promise of the Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on High.” (Lk 24:46-47)

From the beginning, Luke identifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of all people – including the Gentiles (Luke 2:32):

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’” (Luke 2:10–11)

In many ways the conditions of the world in the time of Christ were similar to the conditions found in many places around the world today. The centuries leading up to the birth of Christ had seen the uninterrupted human misery of war, famine, disease, political upheaval, and social violence. The Roman Empire had reached its peak and was struggling to keep itself from sliding into decline. The age was marked by tyrannical and unpredictable leaders who had the power to do what they liked and abused anyone they wanted to exploit for their own amusement. Scholars estimate between 10% and 20% of the Roman empire's population were enslaved. This amounted to between five and ten million enslaved at the time of Christ. But many freedmen who had once been slaves, and the very poor and powerless lived with a slave mentality anyway.

Worship of the ancient gods had become a mere formality to many of Rome's aristocratic class that had become so corrupt and depraved that they no longer believed in superior beings that were capable of any morality greater than their own. The ancient philosophers abandoned the idea of sin but despaired of the moral failures and hopelessness of the human condition. Selfishness and self-interest were the motivations for everything they did. Many people longed for some kind of Savior to come and deliver them from the fear and superstitions of evil spirits that plagued the souls of men.

The longing of the human condition for a Savior is addressed in Luke. Salvation is used in several other contexts in all of the Gospels. Aside from healings, Luke includes the Lord as the Savior of **life itself** (6:9; 9:24; 23:35-39), the Savior from **spiritual death** (8:12; 18:26), and the Savior who brings believers into the **kingdom of heaven** (13:23).

The title of Savior is dear and precious to every Gospel writer. Luke's Gospel emphasizes the Lord's concern for the poor, downtrodden, and sinners. (See HANDOUT, "The Marginal Members of Society Jesus Reached Out To")

The birth of Jesus was announced first to the lowly shepherds (Luke 2:10-11). The "good news of great joy" proclaimed by the angels is for all people: "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Jesus never showed any partiality towards those who came to Him for salvation. He forgave sinners, healed the sick, and restored lepers based solely upon their faith in coming to Him (7:50; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 18:42). Jesus saw how the hard hearts of the self-righteous prevented them from coming to Him for forgiveness. The despised tax collectors like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), who came to Him, gained entrance to the kingdom of heaven while the religious leaders who did not believe they needed a Savior were left behind. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

The Christology in Luke's Gospel includes Jesus as God's Prophet (in word and deed). William Barclay wrote, "There is nothing more certain than that Jesus

was regarded as a prophet when in the days of his flesh he lived and taught in Palestine."

Luke describes the "**inaugural event**" of Jesus' Public Ministry as the visit to his hometown of Nazareth. (In Mark and Matthew, Jesus does not visit his hometown of Nazareth until about half-way through his ministry in Galilee – Mark 6:1-6; Matt 13:53-58). In an expanded telling of the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, Luke reports Jesus' announcement of His ministry to the people in His hometown synagogue. Luke places the event immediately after Jesus returns from the temptation in the desert and before he describes the calling of the Lord's first disciples to follow him. Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth and went into the synagogue where He opened the scroll of Isaiah and read:

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Luke 4:18-19

Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2a, announcing "Good News" and "a year of favor from the Lord", but stops short and does not read Isaiah 61:2b, which calls for God's judgment upon His enemies (implicitly upon Israel's enemies). Luke's Jewish audience would have immediately understood the angry reaction from those who witnessed the event. When Jesus applied the text of Isaiah to himself, He implied that He is the "prophet" and the "anointed one" upon whom the Spirit of the Lord anointed to fulfill that prophecy. At that moment the two titles, "Messiah" and "Prophet" met in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The words Jesus spoke that day not only to speak His Jewish audience, but those words have echoed through the centuries and around the world to every person who is longing for their Lord and Savior to come at the age and judge with justice those who have persecuted His church since it began (Revelation 7:9-11).

Jesus is a prophet in the sense that He **fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies** concerning His first incarnation as the Messiah. In the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading a passage from the Prophet Isaiah, Jesus proclaimed, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (4:21). Because Jesus was not accepted as a prophet by the religious leaders of the Jews, He added, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country." (4:24). John confirmed that statement of Jesus when he said, "He came to His own and His own did not receive Him." (1:11).

Missionaries and evangelists around the world will face many people who have a similar attitude as those who rejected Jesus in His day. No one should be surprised if the Gospel they preach is not readily accepted – even when indigenous workers evangelize their friends and neighbors. Being accepted by family members may be the most difficult aspect of ministry. Because your family knows your history, including your past failures, and your weaknesses, they may not be willing to look past those things and see the new person you have become. Although Jesus was perfect, His neighbors still thought of Him only as a carpenter, “the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon...” and so, they were offended at His words (Mark 6:3).

Working miracles was a part of the ministries of the great prophets of Israel. Jesus was not only called a prophet, but He was also known as a **miracle-worker**. After Jesus raised to life the dead son of the widow of Nain, Luke records the reaction of those who witnessed it: “Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has risen up among us’; and ‘God has visited His people.’” (7:16). The miracles of Jesus enhanced His status as a great prophet; the people believed that Elijah or one of the other ancient prophets of Israel had risen from the grave (9:8; 9:19). King Herod was afraid that John the Baptist that he had beheaded had come back from the dead (9:9).

Herod’s fear of Jesus was so great that it made him want to kill Jesus, just as he had done to John the Baptist. When Jesus heard of it, Luke says, Jesus responded:

“Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.’ Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing. (13:32-34).

Luke’s Gospel looks beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the Gentile nations that would hear the preaching of God’s apostles. Luke includes stories when Jesus proclaims God’s mercy and care for all nations, not just Israelites. Salvation is not for Jews only, but also for their foreign enemies and oppressors. Although salvation was being offered to the Jews first (Matthew 15:24), In Luke 4:25-27, Jesus used two examples from the days of Elijah & Elisha to show God caring for Gentiles:

- **The Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17).** “But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow...”
- **Namaan the Syrian Leper (2 Kings 5).** “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

The reaction of the Jews to such preaching was predictable. The Jews had suffered so much under the oppression of Greek and Roman rule that the idea that God would save them was insulting to most Jews:

“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. 30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.” (Luke 4:28–30).

Christian missionaries should never assume that their preaching will be universally accepted. Missionary evangelists often step into places where decades or even centuries of bitter rivalries have created deep social divides, racial prejudices, and ethnic tensions. It is often the case that the poorest and most downtrodden of a nation are the ones who are most receptive to the Gospel because they see clearly how desperately they need a Savior. But, at the same time, others will resent missionaries who successfully minister to a group that are hated or resented by them. It is important for missionaries to be aware of the potential conflicts that may be created by not fully understanding the political and social conditions of the people they go and preach the Gospel to.

Questions for Lesson Eight

1. How does Luke’s presentation of Jesus as the “Son of Man” speak to those who follow the Greek ideal of “man as the measure of all things”?
2. Why is Christology an important study for Christian missionaries, evangelists, and ministry leaders?
3. What lessons can be learned from the “inaugural event” of Jesus’ Public Ministry described in Luke 4:16-30?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES NT 201-9

JOHN PART ONE: “THE WORD BECAME FLESH”

Lesson Outline

- I. John’s Portrait of Jesus
 1. Logos
 2. Savior
- II. Seven “I am” Statements of Jesus
 1. Bread of Life (6:35-51)
 2. Light of the World (8:12 – 9:5)
 3. Gate for the Sheep (10:7-9)
 4. Good Shepherd (10:11-14)
 5. Resurrection & Life (11:35)
 6. Way, Truth & Life (14:6)
 7. True Vine (15:1-5)

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (John – Author)

Approximate Date Written: A.D. 85-90

Original and Primary Audiences: John’s Gospel was more universal in scope; it was written for all believers.

Purpose: To prove that Jesus is the Son of God and that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life

Context: John the apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of James, wrote his Gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and before his exile to the island of Patmos where he wrote Revelation. The last of the canonical Gospels to be written, John does not go over much of the ground covered in the other three Gospels; in fact over 90% of John is unique to his Gospel. By the time John wrote his Gospel, Christianity had already penetrated much of the Roman Empire. John countered the Gnostic teachings by presenting Jesus as the eternal Logos (Word), Savior, and Lord of all.

JOHN’S PORTRAIT OF JESUS

When John chose to write his gospel, he chose not to cover the same ground as those who wrote before; he wanted to write from a whole new perspective. By the time John’s gospel was written down, the gospel message had breached the

walls of Jerusalem, was quickly overtaking the Greco-Roman world while spreading beyond to the farthest horizons. But as the gospel message went forward, new questions arose and new challenges came forward from the world around them, making it necessary for the Apostles to define their message for those audiences unfamiliar with the Hebrew Scriptures but still maintain the purity of the gospel. John wanted to address some of the **theological questions about faith in Christ** asked by Jews, Greeks, and Romans, and at the same time, present a Gospel for a **universal audience**.

At first the Jewish authorities attempted to stop the spread of the gospel and silence the leaders of what they considered a strictly Jewish cult that believed Jesus, an itinerant rabbi from Nazareth, was the Messiah of the Jews (Acts 4:18-21). The Greeks, for the most part, ignored Christians. They dismissed as “foolishness” the gospel that proclaimed the resurrection of its leader from the dead (Acts 17:18-21, 32). Romans resisted the spread of the gospel on political grounds; they were suspicious of any movement that might be a potential threat to the supreme power of Rome or upset the social order (Acts 16:20-24, 35-39; 26:30-32). But none of the authorities – Jewish, Greek, or Roman– could stop the dissemination of the gospel seeds that were being carried throughout the world by the divine wind of the Holy Spirit that started from Pentecost. Soon it became clear to the Jews that they could not root out the Gospel. Rome discovered that the more they tried to stamp out the movement, the faster it grew and spread throughout their Empire (before they knew it was inside the very gates of the city of Rome itself: Acts 28:28-31). Greeks could no longer ignore this new faith in a crucified and resurrected Savior that was flourishing all around them, transforming lives and turning the Hellenistic worldview upside-down. Now it was John’s turn to tell the story of Jesus Christ; and as the chapters of his Gospel unfolded like the petals of a flower, his message spoke directly to those from Jerusalem to Athens, to Rome, and to the outermost parts of the world.

Logos

John opens his message by describing Jesus Christ as the eternal *Logos*. In Greek philosophical thought, the term *logos* is used to express the rational principle or *Mind* that ruled the universe. In Hebrew thought *logos* would relate to “the word of God”, which is more than a passive self-expression – it is something that has creative power. Through the word of God a person not only receives truth about God, but also meets God face-to-face. God’s Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ, was sent in order to accomplish a particular purpose, and, after accomplishing His mission, returned to God who sent Him.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,”

says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:8-11

To the Hebrew mind, the word of God is more than sound in the air meant to communicate information. The word of God possesses creative power that can cause something to happen or move men to action. “In the Old Testament the great example of this is the creative word of God. Every act in the drama of creation begins with the word: ‘And God said’ (Gen.1.2, 6, 9, 11,14, 20, 24, 26). The word of the Lord, said Jeremiah, is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces (Jer. 23.29). the heavens were made by the word of God (Ps. 33.6,9). God’s word does not return to him empty and ineffective; it *does* that which it was designed to do (Isa.55:11).” (William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, © 1962, 1978, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, p.422). So, when John said that Jesus is the Word (*Logos*) of God, He meant that Jesus was more than the *voice* of God speaking to mankind; he was saying that Jesus is the manifested, living, active, and creative power of God in human flesh.

Because John’s Gospel was intended to reach an audience that was **universal** in scope, introducing Jesus as the eternal *Logos* from whom all things came into existence spoke to his non-Jewish readers as well. Although Rome conquered the world, the Greeks ruled the arts, sciences, and philosophy of the educated classes. The Greeks used the term *logos* or “word” to express the idea of “reason” or “mind”. In Greek philosophy, *Logos* is the divine reason or mind on which the entire order of the universe depends; that there was a divine mind behind the order. “The *logos* is the mind of God interpenetrating the universe like a soul, putting sense into, and putting reason into man. It is by the *logos* that the universe is controlled and directed and that the chaos has become a cosmos.” (William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, p.426).

By merging the Jewish and Greek ideas of “Word”, John uses *Logos* to communicate that Jesus is the *message* of God incarnate; He is the means by which the mind of God is revealed to mankind. John opens his Gospel with an expanded idea of *The Logos* being active in creation. As John’s Gospel develops, he also communicates that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God’s love for His creation. Love is revealed as the creative principle that redeems mankind from the darkness and ignorance of sin.

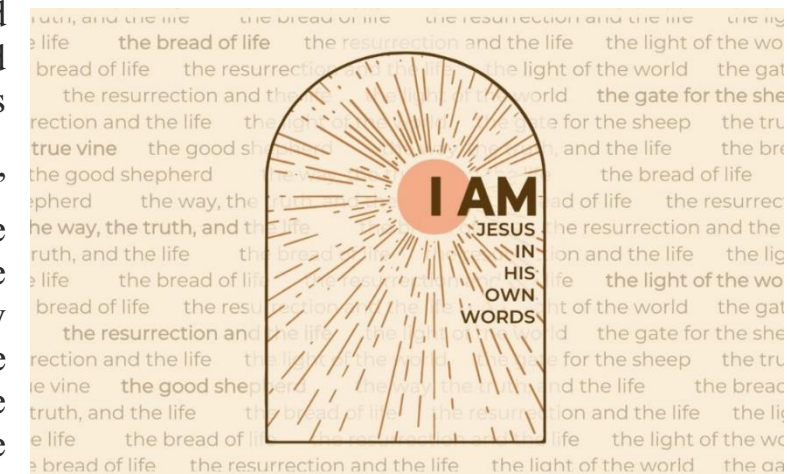
Savior

John uses the events of Jesus’ earthly life to establish His divine credentials as the Word of God and Savior of all mankind. Soon after His baptism – where John the Baptist declares Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” – Jesus commands His first disciples to leave all to follow Him. John then describes Jesus’ absolute power as the Son of God when He performs His first sign, transforming the water of legal purification into the wine of a “new dispensation” at the wedding in Cana. Next John takes us to the heart of Jerusalem where Jesus makes a whip out of cords and with divine authority, drives the moneychangers out of the temple. By the end of the second chapter of John, the Romans, Greeks, and Jews would have completely understood John’s message that Jesus was no ordinary man, but was God’s Son, sent to this earth at the perfect time on a mission to save mankind with divine authority. In the next few chapters of John, Jesus moves from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the multitudes beyond, ministering to all who come to him. John never loses focus on his primary goal of showing that Jesus is the Son of God who is Savior and Lord of all.

THE SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS IN JOHN

The structure of John’s gospel (see HANDOUT “The Sevens in John”) demonstrates a carefully thought-out presentation. John, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, chose those words and deeds of Jesus that best described Him as *The Logos*, the eternal Word and Son of God who was with God from the beginning, and who is in fact, God incarnate.

Each of these “I AM” statements of Jesus are intended to reveal His true identity to the Jews, and by extension, to the world. The context in which these statements are made and the teachings surrounding these statements are critical to their full intended meaning. As the Apostle Paul would state later: salvation was for the Jews first and then for the Gentiles (Romans 1:16). So, the immediate context for each “I AM” spoken, and its relationship to the Old Testament’s Scriptures helps John’s Jewish and Gentile audiences to understand the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. (See HANDOUT “The Claims of Christ”)



1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35-51). It was not just the religious leaders that were struggling to believe that Jesus was sent from God. After His confrontations with the Jewish authorities at the temple during Passover (John 2:12 – 25) and after healing a lame man on the Sabbath by the Sheep Gate pool called Bethesda (5:1-47), Jesus was back by the Sea of Galilee. In Jerusalem, Jesus had forcefully defended His claims to be God’s Son in a war of words with the authorities there. Back in His home territory of Galilee, the crowds followed Him because “they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.” (John 6:2).

Seeing that the multitudes following Him were hungry, and there was no other way of feeding them, Jesus performed a miracle and fed about five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish. After feeding them, Jesus dismissed the crowds, sent His disciples across the Sea by boat and went to a place where He could be alone before rejoining His disciples, walking to them on the water. The next day, the multitudes were searching for Jesus expecting to receive more miraculous food. But Jesus had not come to fill their stomachs. He wanted people to understand that physical food only satisfied hunger temporarily, but the Son of God had come to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Jesus was saying the He is **the bread that provides eternal life**.

The message was clear: the Manna in the wilderness satisfied the physical needs of the Israelites, but only for a while. Christ, the “Bread of Life” satisfies our spiritual needs forever. Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life. Physical bread satisfies hunger; but like those who ate the manna, all will die eventually. Only Jesus can provide the bread of life that leads to life everlasting.

2. “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life” (John 8:12). Jesus was back in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles when He made this pronouncement. This Feast was of great significance to the Jews: “Three things specially marked the Feast of Tabernacles: its joyous festivities, the dwelling in ‘booths,’ and the peculiar sacrifices and rites of the week.” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition*, © 1994 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Mass., p.215). Tabernacles was a joyous occasion for it reminded them of their ancestors’ forty-year journey in the Wilderness with Moses (Leviticus 23:42-43); and it celebrated the Fall harvest (Exodus 23:16). “The ‘booths’ on the roofs, in the courtyards, in streets and squares, as well as roads and gardens, within a Sabbath’s day’s journey, must have given the city and neighborhood an unusually picturesque appearance. The preparation of all that was needed for the festival – purification, the care of the offerings that each would bring, and friendly communications between those who were to be invited to the sacrificial

meal – no doubt sufficiently occupied their time. When the early autumn evening set in, the blasts of the priest’s trumpets on the Temple Mount announced to Israel the advent of the feast.” (*The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, p.219).

Throughout the Feast, four large, golden lampstands illuminated the Court of the Women at the temple. The entire city was lit up. Men danced before the people with flaming torches in their hands; hymns and songs of praise were sung; and the Levites, with all kinds of musical instruments stood on the steps of the temple and worshiped.

Jesus had already taken advantage of the ceremony of pouring water from the Pool of Siloam to identify Himself as the source of the “living water” of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-43). Now, in the fading hours of the eight-day feast, Jesus declares Himself again to the nation of Israel saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.” (John 8:12). Water and fire are both symbols for the Holy Spirit. Jesus was at once, declaring Himself as **the Anointed One** in whom the Spirit of God was manifested, and as the one who would **send the Holy Spirit** to His church.

John introduced his Gospel by stating that Jesus was the Christ, sent to save a world darkened by sin. As the living Word (*Logos*) and light of the world, Jesus offers light and guidance to those stumbling in sin (Psalm 119:105). But “He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11). And so, on this day, the crowd reacted to His declaration with a mixture of unbelief and threats of violence against Him. Then as if to punctuate all He had said on that day, Jesus heals a man who had been born blind (chapter nine), saying, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that who see may be made blind.” (9:39). And to the stiff-necked and unbelieving religious authorities who witnessed the miracle, but rejected the Son of God, Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore, your sin remains.” (9:41).

3. “I am the door of the sheep.” Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:7–8). His teaching about being the only way to the Father was repeated in different ways. Jesus was consistent, declaring Himself as the only way of salvation, the only way into the kingdom, and the only way to the Father.

4. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own.”

(John 10:11, 14). The image of the shepherd as a **spiritual leader of the people** has its roots in the Old Testament. Great figures like Abraham, Moses, and David were shepherds. David wrote, “The Lord is my shepherd...” (Psalm 23:1). Psalms 77:20; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; and 100:3 continue the theme of the Lord as the Shepherd leading His people. While Isaiah 40:11 pictures God as a loving and compassionate shepherd who carries His people in his bosom like a lamb.

It was only natural that the image of a shepherd guiding, protecting, and saving his people would be applied to the coming Messianic king. Ezekiel wrote:

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: ‘Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.’” (34:20–24).

The Jews would have understood immediately, the Messianic implications of Jesus’ declaration. The depth of meaning behind the image of the good shepherd who defends the flock against the wild beasts contrasted sharply against those “hirelings” that ran away at the first sign of danger. Wherever shepherds grazed their sheep in the world, the image of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd would speak volumes about the relationship of the Lord to those who believed in Him and followed Him.

“Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He came in strength and courage to lead men back to God. Unceasingly he watches over his people, with them, as he promised, even to the end of the world. With gentle kindness he heals their diseases and comforts their sorrows and finds for them the food which is the living bread. With unwearied patience he bears with all their follies, their mistakes and their sins. And in the end he sacrificed his life that they might be safe.” (William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, © 1962, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, MI, p.200).

5. **“I am the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25–26). Jesus spoke this towering statement of hope to the grieving sister of His friend, Lazarus, after he had died. But this was not the only time Jesus applied this Messianic promise to Himself. Jesus shocked the

religious leaders in Jerusalem when He declared **His equality with the Father** and then proclaimed, “the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth.” (John 5:28–29). In Galilee, Jesus again identified Himself as the Messiah who would on the “Last Day” fulfill the promise of eternal life for all who believed in Him (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus repeated His statement, saying, “whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” And then asks, “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26).

For those who do not believe in the Son of God, death only brings a sense of despair, hopelessness, and finality. Jesus proved His glorious words by bringing His dead friend back to life. Later, Jesus showed the world that He had conquered the grave when He, Himself, rose to life just as the Father had promised. Jesus then became the “first born” over all who would believe and have their sins forgiven by His blood (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:55 that for Christians, death no longer holds its sting because Jesus overcame the grave – and therefore, all who are in Christ will live forever with Him (Revelation 1:5).

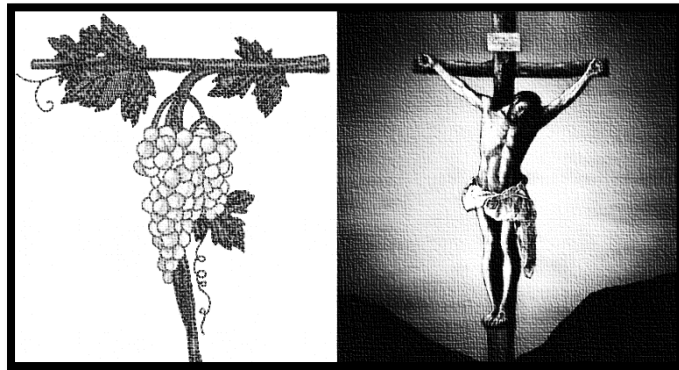
6. **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6). In the final hours before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus struggled to console His closest disciples. They were confused about Jesus’ statements about His departure from them and His return to the bosom of His heavenly Father. Jesus assured them: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” (John 14:1–4). Thomas, speaking what all the others must have been thinking at that moment, said that they did not know where the Lord was going. So, how could they know the way to find Him? It was then that Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

To this very day, many people argue that all religions are the same, and that it does not matter which spiritual path they choose because all roads lead to heaven. But Jesus made it very clear that there are not many paths or religions to God. The only way to eternal life in heaven is through the cross of Christ. The blood of Jesus is the only way to have your sins forgiven. Jesus Christ is more than a source for truth and knowledge about God; He is the **incarnation of divine truth itself**. Walking in His truth is the only path that leads to eternal life. All other paths – no matter how spiritual they seem – will only lead to

deception and darkness. Jesus offers the light of truth to those who are lost in spiritual darkness. In Jesus Christ alone can spiritually dead people be raised to eternal life. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the very life of God. There is no other option; no substitute truth; no other way to salvation except through Him.

This statement of Jesus has echoed down through the ages because it speaks to anyone who is trying to gain access to God's favor by religion, through their own good works, or by spiritual self-discipline. John 14:6 is significant to all Christian evangelists, pastors, missionaries, and teachers today because we are surrounded by people who embrace different beliefs and religions that all claim to provide access to God. As it was in Jesus' day, people who do not believe in Him, will try to earn God's favor to have eternal life; but apart from Jesus Christ all other ways will lead to disappointment in the end.

7. **“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser... I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing”** (John 15:1-5). Immediately after declaring Himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” Jesus revealed another essential truth for all those who believe in Him: the way to eternal life is to be one with Him. Salvation is more than a legal contract between God and man; it is more than an emotional experience. In Christ, salvation is abiding, remaining, enduring, living in unity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Hebrew Scriptures contain many references to Israel as God's vine (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15; Hosea 10:1). But because of the nation's disobedience, they were unfruitful and instead of being a source of life (salvation) to the nations, they were uprooted. Jesus came to fulfill God's plan to save the world (John 3:16).



The image of Jesus being the “true vine” is full of significance. It reflects His inaugural miracle of changing water into wine (John 2:1-11) and invokes the image of John 3:14, as the fruitful vines of the garden are lifted up and supported by wooden crosses.

By taking up our cross daily and abiding in Christ, we enable His life to flow in and through us (Luke 9:23; 14:27). As the Son was submitted to His Father's will, so His disciples must be submitted to the “pruning” of the Father by obeying His will (Matthew 6:10). Then we cannot help but bear fruit that will honor the Father. In Christ, the nurturing, tending, and pruning process of the

Father takes place by His Holy Spirit (John 14:15-28; 16:5-15). Apart from the blood of the true Vine, Jesus Christ, we cannot grow to our full potential and bear much fruit for the kingdom of heaven.

What Is the Significance of John's Gospel for Today?

John's account of the life of Jesus is significant to all people. As his Gospel unfolds, John records the pronouncements by Jesus that reveal His true identity to Jews first and then to the Gentiles. By the end of his Gospel, John has made it clear to all who read it that Jesus left no doubt about Himself as the Savior of the whole world. Jesus pointed to Himself as the Son of God. He made it clear that He was the Messiah that the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied was coming. But He was far more than what the Jewish people were expecting: He was God incarnate. The Jews' inability to accept this truth is what caused them to reject Him in the end. But John revealed the necessity of Christ's rejection and execution.

Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). His resurrection reveals to all mankind, His divine identity as truly being the Son of the living God. John's account of the events leading up to His ascension points ahead to what lies ahead for His believers as they wait expectantly for His Second Coming. The final verses of John's Gospel affirm that what he wrote was not something he made up, but his testimony about Jesus is trustworthy: “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:24)

John also indicates that His Gospel does not contain a complete picture of everything Jesus did and said in His short time on earth because “the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” about it.

Questions for Lesson Nine

1. How would you explain Jesus as the “logos” of God to someone who had never heard that term before?
2. How would you use the events of Jesus' earthly life to establish His divine credentials as the Word of God and Savior of all mankind to someone who was not familiar with the Gospel?
3. How do the seven “I am” statements of Jesus Christ in John's Gospel help establish Him as the true Son of God?”
4. What makes John's Gospel more universal in scope than any of the other Gospels?
5. Does John's Gospel completely close the story of Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES 201-10

JOHN PART TWO: “Jesus the Lord and Savior”

Lesson Outline

- I. Jesus is LORD
- II. Jesus is Savior

JESUS IS LORD

“Of all the titles of Jesus the title Lord became by far the most commonly used, widespread, and theologically important. It would hardly be going too far to say that the word Lord became a synonym for the name of Jesus.” William Barclay

The word “Lord” appears literally thousands of times in the Bible. In both Old and New Testaments, “LORD” is used in place of the proper name of God (See HANDOUT, “Why Is LORD Capitalized in Some Bibles?”). Because the Jews believed the sacred name of God, *Yahweh*, was too holy to write or pronounce, they substituted “Lord” for it. Some English translations distinguish the proper name with “LORD” (all capitalized).

The term “Lord” (Greek *kurios*) became one of the earliest **confessions of the church** regarding Jesus:

“This is the message of faith that we proclaim: 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.” (Romans 10:8–9 Holman Christian Standard)

“...no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3b)

“...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:11)

In the ancient world, the word “*kurios*” or lord could be used as a title of respect and affection; or it could be used to designate a person who is a legal guardian; it was applied to the Roman Emperor, the supreme ruler; it was given to every heathen god, and to God himself. When the church identified the risen, glorified Jesus of Nazareth as the “Lord Jesus Christ” it went beyond the purely human use of the word. “In the days of his flesh no one fully knew who Jesus was; it took the Resurrection and the descent of the Spirit to reveal his full majesty and wonder. It would indeed be a reasonable working rule to say that *kurie*, when applied to Jesus in the day of his flesh, practically always means ‘Sir’ or ‘Master,’ while *kurie* and *kurios* applied to Jesus after the Resurrection practically always mean Lord.” (William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, © 1962, 1978, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, p.415).

The fact that the Gospels use “Lord” hundreds of times to refer to Jesus indicates that from the earliest days of the church, they knew and believed that the Son of God was equal to His Father. Luke often introduces words of Jesus in the same way the Old Testament introduces words spoken by the LORD, God of Israel, saying, “The Lord said...” (Luke 11:39; 13:15:17:6; 18:6; 22:31). John’s Gospel uses “Lord” to refer to Jesus as naturally as His given name:

“...however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks.” (John 6:23)

“It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.” (John 11:2)

“When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” (John 20:20)

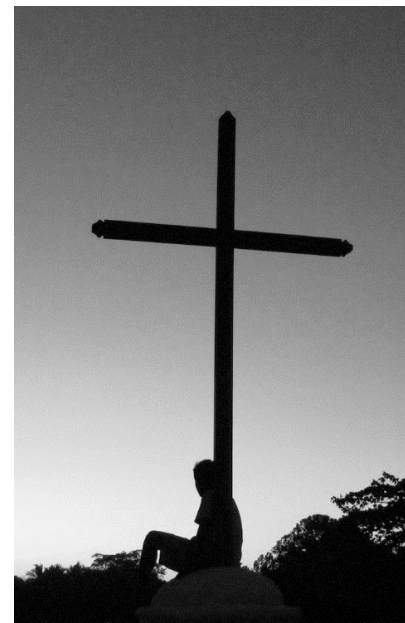
The book of Acts routinely refers to Jesus simply as “Lord” or “the Lord.” In a few places, Luke specifically calls Him, “the Lord Jesus.” When we come to the letters of Paul and the other Apostles, *kurios* has clearly become the standard word by which Jesus was known by the church and preached to the world.

Although the belief in Jesus as Lord is of great importance to the church, Jesus’ own teachings on His identity and mission were much broader in scope and should not be ignored. (see HANDOUT: “Jesus Teaches on His Identity And His Mission”). Shortly after His resurrection, the title most often used by the church for Jesus is “Lord.” Christ is the Messiah of God who conquered death and is alive forever.

The Romans used *Kurios* as the regular title of the Emperor; the Jews used *Messiah* as the regular title for God's Anointed King who was to come. It was only natural that Christians would adopt *Kurios* (Lord) as the title for the risen Jesus to indicate His majestic, imperial, kingly power, and glory over all the nations of the earth. Believers linked Jesus' titles "Lord" and "Savior" to communicate that His that His mission was not to harm or obliterate sinners but it was to seek and save the lost. Of equal importance to the church is the knowledge that Jesus is the Savior of mankind.

Savior

The declaration that Jesus Christ is "Savior" was introduced to an ancient world that often applied the title (Greek *Sôtér*) to their gods, political leaders, and public benefactors. The title was quickly adopted by the early church as they related the events of Jesus' life. The Lord Jesus Christ saves from physical illnesses and death as well as spiritual death (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). The New Testament calls Jesus "Savior" more often than the Old Testament calls the Lord by that name. Truly, God is the one who delivered His people from all kinds of evil, harm, and dangers, but spiritual salvation was provided through the Son of God. The spiritual salvation that comes by the Son of God is the free gift of God that can be received only by faith (Romans 5:15-19).



Sin separates people from the God who created them. Jesus the Savior came to save all those who believed in Him from Sin and the separation it causes; separation from sinful people imposed by a holy God, and separation by unrepentant sinners that who want nothing to do with righteousness (John 3:3-21). All who believe in the Son of God have been made "**holy and blameless and without fault**".

Jesus Christ reconciled us in His body of flesh by his death, in order to present us holy and blameless and above reproach before him (Colossians 1:22):

- We have been made **righteous** by our Savior's **obedience** (Romans 5:19).

- Our Savior "**canceled out**" the debt which stood against us because of the law. This He did by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).
- The ungodly have been **purified of their sins** by the blood of our Savior, Jesus who bore their sins on the cross (Romans 5:6; Hebrews 1:3).
- He saved us from the **wrath of God** (Romans 5:9).
- Our Savior **bore our sins** on the cross "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." And by His wounds we are healed (1 Peter 2:24).
- By faith in His blood, our Savior **appeased and satisfied** God's just accusations against us (Romans 3:25).
- "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin**." (1 John 1:7).
- Our Savior **removes all condemnation** from us (Romans 8:1).

Jesus Christ saves us by removing the barrier between humankind and its Maker. (See HANDOUT "The Meaning Of Salvation"). The sin that separates us from God is broken, and the Creator and those who were created in His image are reconciled once and for all: "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

The gospel of salvation which Jesus commissioned His church to proclaim states emphatically that:

- JESUS Saves from Guilt and Shame (a Sense of Guilt)
- He Saves from the Threat and the Power of Evil
- He Saves from Death:
 - Temporal
 - Spiritual
 - Eternal

Countless numbers of people have experienced something that has changed their lives. Faith in Jesus the Savior has brought them a deep peace of mind. They live with a new hope and assurance about the future. Fear of death has been removed and people have faced death with joy, knowing they are entering eternal life with Christ. Christians are confident because the cross of Christ and His resurrection from the grave means they have been "saved" from death. Jesus called this experience being "born again" (John 3:3-8), and that all who believe in Him will have eternal life (John 3:14-17).

Unbelievers respond to feelings of guilt and shame because of sin in their life by any means other than the blood of Jesus. Ever since the Fall of Adam, men have inflicted a self-imposed separation of themselves from God either by defiantly reveling in their sins or refusing to acknowledge or admit to sin in general or to their own personal sins. Some have embraced the idea that doing enough good deeds will outweigh the bad, making bad deeds acceptable. Unbelievers often try to shift the blame for their misbehaviors; it is always somebody else's fault; they are "a victim of circumstances"; or they refuse to admit their own responsibility for their sins and their consequences.

People who try to escape from the consequences of sins often turn to drugs or alcohol to medicate the pain they feel from being unforgiven or from not forgiving others. They often turn to mindless entertainment and fantasy, become emotionally withdrawn, uncaring, callous, and uncommitted. They may try to physically remove themselves from the consequences of their sins: instead of facing up to and admitting to sinful behavior, and then working to compensate those harmed by that behavior, they physically move away from bad circumstances to escape the consequences for actions (i.e. the "gypsy" lifestyle; a pattern of divorces, broken relationships, bankruptcies, career changes, etc.).

The cross of Christ is God's only remedy for human sin. God calls on all people everywhere to:

1. REPENT – Salvation begins when we confess, "Against you and you only I have sinned." We all deserve death unless we face up to and admit our sins to God and anyone we have hurt by our sins.
2. RECEIVE FORGIVENESS – By the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. Atonement for the sins of all people has been made (John 3:16), but it is not in effect until that person believes and receives it by faith. This includes forgiving yourself and forgiving others. Oftentimes, forgiving oneself is harder than forgiving others; but being reconciled first to God, then to others and to our self, sets us free from guilt and shame. By accepting God's forgiveness, we are free from the evil forces at work in this world and are saved from death (Matthew 6:9-14).

In Romans 6:4-11 the Apostle Paul encourages the church to believe that since we have been united with Him spiritually "through baptism into His death," we shall certainly be united with Him in the resurrection. "...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Those who believe and receive salvation from God through Jesus Christ have been freed from sin. "Now if we

died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." Because the Savior lives, Christians live, knowing that death no longer has dominion over them. "He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." In the same way, Christians regard themselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

"God alone can lead us through death to eternal life. Death casts a frightening shadow over us because we are entirely helpless in its presence. We can struggle with other enemies – pain, suffering, disease, injury – but strength and courage cannot overcome death. It has the final word. Only one person can walk with us through death's dark valley and bring us safely to the other side – the God of life, our shepherd. Because life is uncertain, we should follow this shepherd who offers us eternal comfort." (*The Handbook of Bible Application*, Second Edition, Neil S. Wilson, Editor, 2000, p.133).

The promise of being raised again to new life in eternity with the Savior is not intended to make bad people good; to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, it gives hope that they can live in Christ. Christ is our Savior in this life and in the life to come. David wrote in Psalm 23:4a "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."

Preaching the Gospel of Salvation

The primary function of the church is to be the instrument through which the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 is fulfilled (see also Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-47). Evangelists, missionaries, pastors, preachers, and teachers should all know the basic steps that lead others to salvation. In every presentation of the Gospel, there are three essential steps that must be preached to lead someone to Christ.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15

The first step is always the hardest step for people to take: to **admit their sins and confess** those sins to God. Any presentation of the Gospel that does not at least include (if not start with) the sinful condition of every heart will fail to convince anyone that they need a Savior. Apart from the realization that all have sinned and fallen short of righteousness (Romans 3:9-23) and that all will face Divine justice for their acts, the call to repent and believe the gospel will fall on deaf ears. People often ignore, deny, or try to avoid the truth that they have missed

the mark and fallen short of God's perfect holiness, but as the Apostle John reminds us, if we claim we have never sinned, we are only deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). He also said, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:10). Therefore, to lead others to the Savior, they must believe that they are under God's condemnation for their sins but God is ready and able to forgive all who believe in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God.

The second step to lead others to salvation is show them that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, **died on the cross** so that their sins might **be forgiven** (Romans 3:21-26). The Apostle Paul saw that for many, salvation in Christ Jesus is a great mystery:

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." (Romans 16:25–27).

Believers do not need to understand everything about salvation to receive it. You do not need a PhD. in theology to preach about the death and resurrection of the Son of God. What is required is that we have **faith that Christ died for our sins** but on the third day He rose from the dead – all according to Scriptures. It is important that every believer knows exactly what the Scriptures say about our Savior (Luke 24:27). But in the end, every person must take that step of faith and make a personal confession that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

This leads us to the final and critical step: to be saved, everyone must make **a personal decision** to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This requires a leap of faith because it can only come by belief. In John chapter one, Nathanael needed very little to convince him (1:47-51). Nicodemus needed to see and hear more before he could believe. The Samaritan woman at the well needed little convincing before she left her waterpot, went into the city and persuaded others to "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" One thing united each of these very different people: **faith**. As John the Baptist testified, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive

together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:4–10).

True, salvation is a free gift of God but if someone is not convinced that they need saving, they will refuse it. To be effective, our testimony must **convince and convict** the audience that they need to be saved from sin and death, that the cross of Christ is the only way their sins will be forgiven, and eternal life given. Not only must the individual believe, but they must also reach out and grasp it. Once they have received Jesus Christ as their Savior by faith, they must make a **public declaration** that they received Christ into their heart and life. At that moment the gift of God, which is eternal life in Jesus Christ becomes real to them. A public declaration of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior is important if others around them are going to be convinced to believe in Jesus.

"But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame'" (Romans 10:8–11)

The Cross of Christ saves by bridging the gap between this life and the next. In the book of Revelation, John saw the new heaven and new earth coming down out of heaven from God:

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away

every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1–4)

The reconciliation to God through Christ and His cross saves the redeemed from decay and death brought on by Adam’s Fall from grace (Genesis 3:16-19). From the moment of their salvation, believers begin to appropriate the life that was intended for Adam’s race from the beginning of creation. The Apostle Paul said that the fullness of the life God intended for His creation from the beginning of time and continuing on into eternity is waiting to be revealed at the end of this age:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” (Romans 8:18–25)

Although God’s intention that mankind would live in a world of perfect peace and harmony with their creator was shattered at The Fall, the curse that fell upon mankind and subjected the world to frustration and futility by the curse was never intended by God to be a permanent condition. God did not plan that His creation should remain forever in such a broken condition (Genesis 3:15). As Paul indicated, God subjected creation to frustration – not for despair but in hope. This hope was that at some future time, mankind along with the creation, would be saved from its bondage to decay, sickness, and death.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote that the whole of creation waits for the revealing of the adopted “sons of God.”

“But we have not yet come of age; we are not yet old enough to receive the full privileges of our ADOPTION as sons. We will receive the full privileges of our adoption, our full inheritance, on that day

when the REDEMPTION of our bodies takes place – the day when our bodies are resurrected. On that day we will receive the full benefits of our redemption, of our salvation. We also, together with the whole creation, wait eagerly for that day!” *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, Thomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, © 1996, p.584

Questions for Lesson Ten

1. The Gospel of John opens by naming Jesus the “Word” (*logos*). How does that title help to communicate the full identity of Jesus Christ?
2. The title “Lord” (Greek *kurios*) became one of the earliest confessions of the church regarding Jesus. How important is it when preaching the gospel today that Christians proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ?
3. The early church preached a gospel that declared Jesus Christ is both Lord and Savior. How important is it to preach Jesus as both Lord and Savior in our presentation of the gospel?
4. What is the meaning of “salvation”? How important is it to effectively communicate the different ways Jesus saves?
5. What are the reasons why some people refuse to believe and receive the gospel of salvation?
6. Review the steps that need to be taken to lead others to salvation. Is there more than one way to lead others through these steps?
7. Why is it so important to convince new believers to make a public declaration of their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES 201-11

THE GOSPELS

“From the Tomb to the Throne”

The Gospels tell how Jesus Christ fulfilled His mission through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Lesson Outline

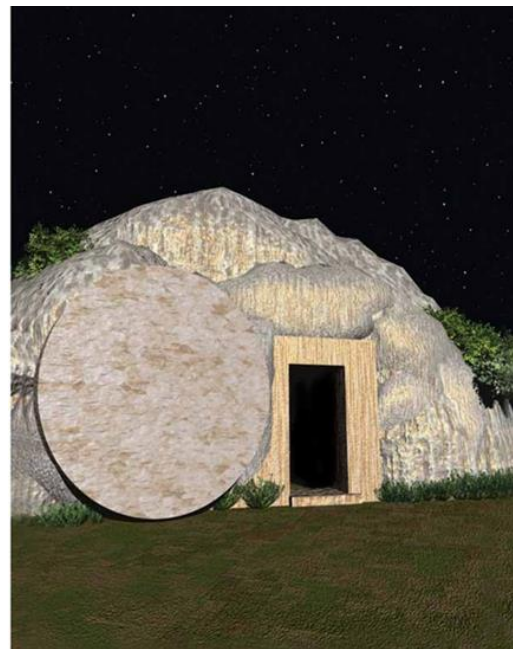
- I. Introduction: Significance of the Resurrection
- II. The Morning of The Resurrection
- III. The Afternoon and Evening of The Resurrection
- IV. Appearances Of Jesus After the First Day

INTRODUCTION

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb on the first Easter Morning is one of the most significant events in all of human history. In fact Paul said that if the resurrection had not taken place, “then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified that He raised up Christ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 15, 17). And yet not one of the Gospels gives us a complete account of all the events that took place the morning Jesus rose from the tomb.

On the one hand, it seems odd that the



Holy Spirit did not direct at least one, if not all of the Gospel writers to record all that happened not only that morning but also for the weeks following that event and all the way to the Ascension of Our Lord. But we are told almost nothing of what Jesus taught His disciples during that period between the Resurrection and His Ascension. We are told that after the resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to His disciples and that over five hundred people saw Him at one time (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

Readers should keep in mind the fact that we have four different witnesses to the same event; much like a modern courtroom drama where each witness contributes a part of the picture, but the whole picture does not emerge until the end and all four witnesses have spoken. So too, the four different Gospels bear witness to the same event, but the whole picture will not emerge until the end.

Still, the four Gospels taken collectively do not tell us all we would *like* to know about the resurrection, but they do tell us all we *need* to know:

1. that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead as He said He would and according to the Scriptures; and
2. that His resurrection was a physical resurrection and not a figurative or mystical experience seen only by a few.
3. Jesus proved without a doubt, to those who saw Him (and afterwards to those who did not see but believed their testimonies) that He was, is, and forever shall be Lord and Christ.

Some critics of the New Testament have argued that the Gospel reports are incompatible, and in some places, contradictory. A surface reading of the four accounts would seem to support their claims because it is difficult to put the events into a strict timeline (the Holy Spirit did not lead any of the Gospel writers to narrate the story like a blow-by-blow newspaper account).

Although different reference materials may place the events of the early morning of the resurrection in a slightly different order, if we approach the Gospel accounts like a good detective and piece together the testimonies of those who were there, we will have a good understanding of every essential thing that happened that morning and in the days following up to the Ascension of Jesus.

THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION

(Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1-18)

Everything happened exactly as Jesus predicted it would. Mark records three times when Jesus specifically warned His disciples that after entering Jerusalem the last time, He would be arrested, beaten, and crucified, but on the third day He would rise from the dead. It was clear however, that all those who heard those

words were still unable to grasp the true meaning of them; they could not take them literally. The significance of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Messiah had yet to be revealed to them. Now after the Sabbath, while it was still dark, some women who had come with Jesus and the disciples from Galilee got up and went to the tomb where Jesus was laid. They took with them spices they had prepared to anoint Jesus' body. The women who were named are Mary Magdalene, the other Mary (the mother of James), Joanna, and Salome. But Luke adds that "certain other women" (Luke 24:1) not named, went there as well.

They arrived at the tomb still very early in the morning, just after the sun had risen over the horizon. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked and saw the tomb, they realized that the stone had already been rolled away. (Note that before the women had arrived an angel of the Lord descended from heaven. The angel had come to the tomb and rolled back the stone from the door, causing a great earthquake.

The angel sat on the rock that had sealed the tomb and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards who were at the tomb shook from fear of him and fainted. After they regained their composure, they fled from the tomb. So when the women arrived, they found the tomb opened and unguarded.

Upon entering the tomb, the women saw an angel that looked like a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be afraid. I know you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, for He has risen as He said to you while He was still in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples – and Peter – that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him again, as He told you."

So the women went out quickly from the tomb. With fear and great joy, and saying nothing to anyone, they ran to bring His disciples word. The women returned to the place where the disciples were staying and told everything to the eleven and to all who were with them, but no one believed them. But when Mary Magdalene said to Peter and John, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him" they got up and ran to the tomb. Mary and some of the other women followed them.

John outran Peter and arrived first at the tomb, and stooping down looked in, and saw the linen cloths lying there. Yet he did not go in. Peter arrived at that moment and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but

folded together in a place by itself. Then John went in also; he saw and believed what the women had said. (But Peter and John still did not understand the Scriptures that He must rise again from the dead.) They departed again to their own homes, marveling to themselves at what had happened.

About this time Mary arrived back at the tomb, but stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb. At that moment, she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where Jesus' body had been. (Note the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple had the two angels that surrounded the Mercy Seat). The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." As she was saying this, she turned around and saw someone standing there, but did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Assuming Him to be the gardener, Mary said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

Realizing it was Jesus, she said to Him, "Teacher!"

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

At this moment the other women who followed Mary to the tomb arrived. Jesus greeted them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they bowed down and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my disciples to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Mary Magdalene and the women went and told the disciples that they had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken to them, but they did not believe them.

Now while the women were at the tomb early in the morning, the guards who fled from the angel came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. The chief priests quickly assembled with the elders and consulted together. They decided to deny the report that Jesus had risen from the dead and gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, instructing them to tell anyone who asked what happened, that His disciples must have come at night and stole away His body while they slept. "And if it comes to the governor's ears," they promised, "we will appease him and make you secure."

So the guards took the money and did as they were instructed.

THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF THE RESURRECTION

(Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-43; John 20:19-25)

On The Road To Emmaus

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The day of the resurrection, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together about all the things that had happened earlier that morning. While they were talking and trying to make sense of what happened, Jesus Himself drew near to them and walked with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him, and they did not know it was Jesus walking with them.

He asked them what the conversation was that they were having with one another and why they were so sad. Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have you not known the things which happened there in these days?”

Jesus asked them, “What things?”

They replied, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”

Then the Lord said to them, “Foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

When they drew near to the village where they were going, He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they urged Him not to go on, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

A short time later, Jesus sat at the table to eat with them. When He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

Amazed, they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

So they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. As soon as they arrived back in the city, they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” And the two disciples told the others about the things that had happened on the road, and how they knew Him in the breaking of the bread.

(NOTE: Only Luke’s Gospel mentions that the Lord appeared to Simon Peter that morning, but Luke gives us no more information than the fact that it happened. Paul also mentions the testimony that Jesus appeared to Peter before He appeared to the other disciples in 1 Corinthians 15:5).

In Jerusalem

While the disciples were discussing all the things that had happened that day in Jerusalem and on the road to Emmaus, Jesus Himself appeared and stood in the midst of them, and said “Peace be with you.” and He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

After He said this, He showed them His hands, feet, and side. But they still did not believe it was Him in the flesh, even though they rejoiced and marveled at His appearing. He said to them, “Have you any food here?” And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb, which He took and ate in their presence.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you!” As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them. “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Now one of the twelve disciples, Thomas, was not with them when Jesus came. As soon as he returned, the other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But Thomas said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

This ends the account of all that happened on the day Jesus rose from the tomb.

APPEARANCES OF JESUS AFTER THE FIRST DAY

(Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:44-52; John 20:26 – 21:25; Acts 1:4-11)

In Jerusalem

Eight days after the resurrection, the disciples were again inside their room with the doors shut, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came into the room, stood in their midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.”

And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

In Galilee (By the Sea)

The disciples followed Jesus’ instructions to go to Galilee (Matthew 28:10) where He would meet with them. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other disciples not named were together by the Sea of Galilee.

They decided to go fishing.

They went out in a boat and fished all night but caught nothing. When the morning came, Jesus was standing on the shore; yet the disciples did not know it was Jesus. Then Jesus asked them, “Children, have you any food?”

They answered Him, “No.”

And He said to them, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

John said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it) and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, dragging the net with fish. As soon as they reached the land, they saw a fire of coals with fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.”

Simon Peter went up and helped drag the net full of fish to land. And although there were so many (one hundred and fifty-three), the net was not broken.

Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?” – even though they knew that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise ate the fish. (The Apostle John, the only one that includes this account, notes that this was the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.)

After they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?”

Peter said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”

Peter said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

The Lord said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, Do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him a third time, “Do you love Me?”

And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”
Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” Then He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him
“Follow Me.”

Then Peter, turned around and saw John following them. Peter asked, “But Lord, what about this man?”

Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that you? You follow Me.”

John notes that this was the origin of the saying that went out among the early church that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say to Peter that John would not die, but only, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that you?”

In Galilee (On the mountain)

Then the eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus told them they would see Him (Matthew 28:10, 16). When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but still there were some who doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

In Jerusalem

From Galilee, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for further instructions from the Lord.

When Jesus appeared to them again, He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Then He Jesus said to them, “This it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of

My Father upon you, which you have heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The end of Luke’s Gospel is tied to the beginning of Acts with the descriptions of Jesus’ final appearances and words to His disciples.

Luke’s Gospel says that Jesus led them out as far as Bethany. And as they gathered around Him, they asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

And He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem. And in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

And He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him to into heaven.”

And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

John’s Postscript

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” John 20:30, 31

“Mission Accomplished”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3–5).

God the Father prepared His Son for His Mission

At the moment of His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove, and the Father’s presence is expressed in His voice declaring, “*You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased*” (Luke 3:22). Jesus would need the Spirit of the Living God and His Father’s presence to empower Him and equip Him for the journey He would take to Calvary and beyond. But even before the moment of His baptism, God prepared a home for Jesus, with loving parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, and many others would help Him along the way as He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with “God and men” Luke 2:52.

Gospel writers were not led by the Holy Spirit to include any of the details of the years Jesus spent growing up in Nazareth. Cult groups have often speculated on these years and have come up with some wild and fanciful tales of the young Jesus’ supposed miracles and travels to places as far away as the Himalayan Mountains of Tibet. But there is nothing to indicate that Jesus did any of that. Except for His sinless nature, Jesus’ life was not extraordinary in any way before the moment when He stepped into public ministry and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism. And this would fit with the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah 11:1 and 53:2.

God the Father used the Son to bring glory to His name through His mission. In His final hours, knowing the fate that was waiting for Him, Jesus looked toward heaven and His disciples heard Him pray, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” John 17:1-5

Jesus went to the cross with the assurance that He was completing the work His Father had sent Him to do. The Father delighted in the Son every day of His existence, knowing that the Son, in every way, revealed His Father’s nature and glory to the world. This was Jesus’ ultimate mission: to glorify the Father. It is difficult for us to understand how the horrible and humiliating death of Jesus upon the cross would bring glory to God, but that is exactly how Jesus spoke of it:

“But Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves

Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

‘Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save Me from this hour”? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.’

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’” (John 12:23–28)

From the beginning of His earthly mission, Jesus had “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). He knew what was waiting for Him once His disciples were ready to be sent out into the world in His name. Jesus knew how the events of His final hours would unfold. He was fully aware that He would be betrayed, arrested, falsely accused, stripped, beaten, humiliated, and crucified. But He also knew that after He was laid in the tomb, that would not be the end, but only the beginning of a new world. All of these things were not accidents – events that would spin out of control. All that took place in the last hours of His earthly life had been predetermined long before the Son of God took His first breath in human flesh (Luke 24:26-27).

“We cannot but admire our Savior and love Him more as we see Him courageously enter into this time of suffering and eventual death. We must remember that He did it for us.” – Warren Wiersbe

In the end, Jesus fulfilled His mission and went all the way to the cross for us. But His death was not the end. He rose from the tomb and from the other side of that empty tomb; now we clearly see the glory of God in the resurrection, and our part in it:

“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:10–14)

Questions for Lesson Eleven

1. **Read Romans 1:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 and 1 Peter 1:3-5.** How important is the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the testimony of Christians?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-33.** What makes the preaching of the resurrection so important to the gospel message?
3. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 2 Timothy 2:14-19 and Hebrews 6:1-6.** Why is a correct understanding of the resurrection so important for believers grasp?
4. **Read Philippians 3:10-11; Hebrews 11:35-40; and 1 Peter 3:21-22.** What is the power of the resurrection the apostles described?
5. **Read Revelation 20:5-6.** What is the promise for the future for followers of Jesus Christ?

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES 201-12

THE BOOK OF ACTS OVERVIEW

Lesson Outline

PRELUDE

- I. Jesus' Disciples go to Jerusalem to Proclaim the Message of His Lordship to all Peoples.

- II. The Fellowship of Believers is Commanded by Christ to Proclaim the Message of His Lordship to all Peoples.
 - a. In Jerusalem
 1. The Fellowship was Empowered
 2. The Fellowship Increased in Number
 3. The Fellowship was United and Dispersed by Persecution
 - b. In Judea and Samaria
 1. The Old Idea of Separation Breaks Down
 - A. To Samaria
 - B. To the Gentiles
 - c. The Message of Christ the Lord is Proclaimed to the Ends of the Earth
 1. The *Kerygma* means that Christ is more than Lord. He is our:
 - Example
 - Teacher
 - Friend
 - Savior

PRELUDE TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” (Matthew 28:18–20)

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he

who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 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.” (Mark 16:15–18)

“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” (Mark 16:19-20)

“And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” (Luke 24:50–53)

When the last verses of the Gospels are compared with the opening verses of Acts, the book could be the continuation of any one of them. However, Acts makes it clear from the beginning that this is Luke's effort to carry on with his story from the Gospel that bears his name:

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:1–3)

Luke, no doubt, followed the same careful investigative procedures that he used in writing his gospel (Luke 1:1-4), but unlike his gospel, Luke was a firsthand eyewitness to a large part of what he wrote in Acts because he was one of the close traveling companions with Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 13 – 28). But with those events that Luke was not a personal witness to, he would have had the testimonies of Paul and the other Apostles he encountered on his travels to help him fill in key events. Although Acts is an historical document, it is important to keep in mind the fact that Luke is telling the story of the advance of the Gospel message from his perspective of following in Paul's footsteps through Asia minor, to Greece and ultimately to the heart of Rome itself.

Paul was in no way the only missionary traveling to far countries to fulfill the Great Commission to reach the outmost parts of the world. At the same time, other missionaries were rapidly spreading the gospel north, east, and south – as well as west – at this same time. According to Luke, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12), “there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” Of the three thousand souls who heard and believed the kerygma that day, there were Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs. When the Feast was completed and these new believers returned home, they shared at home, what they witnessed in Jerusalem; in this way the Gospel was advancing swiftly to “every nation under heaven.”

Luke was personally involved in many of the events he described, making Acts an important historical document; it forms an important bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. Acts gives us the backdrop and context for all of the New Testament writings that follow the Gospel stories. Because of Acts we have important information about where, when, and to whom the Epistles were written. It helps us to understand some of the more difficult passages from the Epistles when we understand the specifics of the issues being addressed.

Of equal importance to the historical significance of Acts, is the theological significance of the book. Acts traces the development of the church over one generation describing the transition from a predominantly Jewish to a predominantly Gentile membership. Luke’s largely apologetic book (a work written to defend the faith), presents faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as distinct from Judaism, but also as its ultimate fulfillment.

“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” (Acts 1:6-8)

Jesus had accomplished all that the Father sent Him into the world to accomplish:

- He had sought out the lost sheep of Israel and opened the way into the kingdom for them

- For three- and one-half years Jesus had been pouring His teachings into His disciples, revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to them in word and deed
- He finished the work of atonement for all mankind through His death burial and resurrection

Now the time had come for Him to return to the Father and launch out into a world the disciples He had trained. The world was waiting to hear the message of salvation and of the kingdom of heaven. One thing remained for them to receive before they would be ready: the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit. But the disciples were still expecting Jesus to immediately establish His kingdom on earth and did not understand all that was ahead of them and the generations to come before the Lord’s return to establish His kingdom as promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jesus’ Disciples go to Jerusalem to Proclaim the Message of His Lordship to all Peoples.

The Book of Acts begins where the Gospels end. It is primarily Luke’s personal account of his missionary experiences, but included in his account are stories of other Apostles working in the Roman territories that he would have had direct contact with (i.e. Peter, James, John, Paul, etc.).

The rapid expansion and dynamic growth of the New Testament church was not without cost. Jesus warned His disciples that they would be persecuted by His enemies and theirs. They would be arrested and be handed over to the leaders of synagogues and put into prisons. Before the Gospel reached the ends of the world, His disciples would be brought before emperors, kings and governors – all on account of Jesus’ name – every persecution and martyrdom would be the result of His followers being witnesses to them of the Lord (Luke 21:12-13). (See HANDOUT “What Happened to the Twelve Apostles?”)

Christ’s last words before His Ascension, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), were so perfectly realized in the Book of Acts that they effectively and concisely outline its contents:

- You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem **[chaps. 1 – 7]**
- And in all Judea and Samaria **[chaps. 8 – 12]**
- And to the end of the earth **[chaps. 13 – 28]**

After the day of Pentecost, the small fellowship of believers in the upper room is commanded by Christ to proclaim the message of His lordship to all nations. God gave to His own a great message of salvation for all; now the fulness of time had come and it was ready for launching (Galatians 4:4). Beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire, Acts traces the rapid westward expansion of the gospel by a small but growing band of dedicated and determined missionaries who were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). These missionaries were motivated by a single conviction that the message they carried was gospel: “good news.” (See HANDOUT “Overview of the Book of Acts”).



Beginning in Jerusalem with Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36), until Paul’s preaching of the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning Jesus Christ in Rome (Acts 28: 30-31), the crucial assertion of all those who proclaimed Jesus Christ is that **God saves from the wrath of His judgment those who believe in the Son of God.**

JERUSALEM (Acts 1:1 – 8:4)

In Jerusalem

- The Fellowship was **Empowered by the Holy Spirit.**
- The Fellowship **Increased in Number by the preaching of the Gospel.**
- The Fellowship was **United and Dispersed by Persecution.**

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:9-11)

As the Lord disappeared into the heavens, the disciples stood still with their eyes fixed, watching for the Lord’s immediate return. They stood watching the skies because they had not fully understood the universal and ever-present reality of the kingdom of God, but that was about to come. It took the divine intervention of angels to get the disciples to move up the road that led back to Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit that the Father promised them.

ACTS 2

After the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, **Pentecost** (Acts 2) is the next major world-changing event described in the New Testament. At the beginning of the Passover season, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed, and was resurrected from the tomb. Pentecost is tied to the Passover celebration; it is a harvest celebration that takes place on the fiftieth day after Passover (Gr. pente = Eng. “fifty”).

None of the produce of the harvest could be eaten before the special thanksgiving offerings of two loaves of bread and the peace offering of two lambs were made at the Temple in Jerusalem. Pentecost was significant to the Jews because it was on the fiftieth day after their deliverance from Egypt, that they were given the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai.

PASSOVER TO PENTECOST

- Held 50 days after Passover, Pentecost is also called the **“Feast of Weeks”**
- It was one of the **three major annual feasts** commanded by God (Deuteronomy 16:16)
- Pentecost was a **festival of thanksgiving** for the harvested crops
- Jesus was crucified at **Passover time**
- Jesus ascended **40 days after** His resurrection
- The Holy Spirit came **50 days after** Jesus’ resurrection; 10 days after the Ascension
- **Jews from many nations** gathered in Jerusalem for this festival
- Peter’s speech (Acts 2:14ff) was given to an **international audience**, and it resulted in a worldwide harvest of new believers – the first converts to Christianity
- Many people who responded to Peter’s Pentecost sermon **returned to their homelands** with God’s Good News of salvation. Thus God prepared the way for the spread of the gospel.

In one day the Holy Spirit transformed a small group of fearful men and women into a thriving, worldwide church that is ever moving forward and fulfilling the Great Commission. So it is fitting that on the day the Jews celebrated the birth of their nation as the “first fruits” offered to God, that the God of Israel would choose to birth His church in Jerusalem as the “first fruits” of the New Covenant offered to God from among the nations. The spiritual significance of the Passover is made clear as Luke records three thousand believers from different tribes and tongues were added to the church on that day (Acts 2:46-47). From that day forward, we see the church growing rapidly, but only within the walls of Jerusalem (Acts 4:1-4). Still in its infancy, the church remained centered around the Temple and its services but that would change soon.

Acts 4:32-35 describe how the early church was able to share their possessions and property in a spirit of brotherhood. No one was forced to participate in this way of living; no one was forced to give up all their private property, but all gave generously from what they had. Believers then and are not now required to take vows of poverty and give all their worldly possessions to the church. Their attitude towards possessions and how to give what they could was an indicator of the love of God that was sown in their hearts:

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (Jude 20–23)

In the beginning, believers in Jesus saw no need to separate themselves from Judaism. The church was still focused inwardly; they saw themselves as a sect within Judaism. They had yet to fully grasp the purpose for which the church had been born; to “go” and take the good news of the kingdom to the ends of the world. The good things that were part of their Jewish heritage were to be **means to an end** and not ends in themselves (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-4; 11:1-4; 11:28-32). But soon persecution against those who believed in Jesus started up and quickly intensified as the church grew and gained the attention of the Jewish authorities (Acts 5:27-29).

Tensions in the city of Jerusalem between those who believed in the Messiah Jesus and those who rejected Him were on the rise and reached their height when Steven was accused of blasphemy, arrested, and martyred. Steven’s martyrdom, and the general persecution of Christians that followed, forced many believers to flee out of Jerusalem, but they took the message of the gospel with them (Acts 6:8

– 8:8). Saul (who later would be known as Paul) is introduced in Acts 8:1-3 as a chief persecutor of the church.

God used **the persecution of the church and martyrdom** to get the church moving out of the confines of Jerusalem and scatter them throughout Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The Church at Jerusalem

God’s command to “go” and fulfill the Great Commission was being ignored. The people concentrated in one place – Jerusalem. They were focused on building the community of believers among the Jews only. Nevertheless, the church was thriving, and was being led by strong, Spirit filled leaders. Despite the fact that at Pentecost the gospel was supernaturally communicated in many languages to people who had come to the Feast from many races and cultures, the church was not moving forward with the Great Commission to the ends of the earth. God would allow persecution to force His people to cut their ties with their Jewish brethren who rejected them and move the center of Christianity away from Jerusalem and the temple. The unexpected result of persecution and scattering the church led Jewish believers to discover that many Gentiles were ready and anxious to receive the gospel.

It would take some time for the church to understand that God wanted them to circumvent Judaism and take salvation in Jesus Christ directly to the nations:

“The fires in Jerusalem lighted by Jesus the Christ and fanned into a great flame by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would not be put out. Not even the spilled blood of the saints (Acts 7:54-60) could dampen the enthusiasm for a message which promised the keys to a kingdom. The great persecution (Acts 8:1) which began in the Holy City at the juncture of Stephen’s death, issued in a dispersion. The called of God, bearing their crosses, leaped Jerusalem’s walls and carried the message of salvation into all of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-4).” (Harley Swiggim © 2011, The Adult Christian Education Foundation, Madison, WI, p.81)

Judea and Samaria (8:5 – 12:25)

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were

possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:4–8)

Once the followers of Jesus Christ departed from Jerusalem, the old idea of keeping strict separation from the Gentiles began to break down. Philip the evangelist preaches Christ to a receptive audience in Samaria, a mixed race of Jews (see HANDOUT “The Samaritans”). Led by the Holy Spirit, he goes down the road towards Gaza where he encounters an Ethiopian who believes and is baptized. Saul, the persecutor of the church is converted and preaches Christ in Damascus. Peter is ministering in in “all parts of the country” (9:32), when he is given a vision that reveals God’s plan for the Gentiles – a plan that Peter understands when he accepts an invitation to the home of a Gentile, Cornelius. There, Cornelius and his household are saved by Peter’s preaching of the gospel. Peter returns to Jerusalem and informs the leaders there that God has opened the door for the Gentiles to believe, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit just the same as Jewish believers.

Now out of the confines of Jerusalem, the followers of Jesus were able to interact with new communities that traditionally would have little or nothing to do with the Jews. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Philip follows the footsteps of Jesus (John 4:5-30), and travels to Samaria. There he became a bold witness for the Lord and crashes through the ethnic, racial, and cultural barriers established by the laws of Judaism. From there, Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to travel south along the major coastal highway that leads through Gaza to Egypt and beyond. The Ethiopian believes and is baptized by Philip, making him the first full Gentile believer in Jesus Christ. We are not told what happened to the Ethiopian after that, but it is clear from the history of Christianity in Ethiopia that he preached the gospel there and many believed. “But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.” (8:40).

Acts tells the story of how the wall between Gentile and Jew came crashing down. Later the Apostle Paul would say in Colossians 3:11, “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”

By the time Peter returned from Cornelius’ house, the movement of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus Christ had reached the ears of King Herod Agrippa, the nephew of King Herod Antipas. Antipas was the Herod who executed John the Baptist and who played a small part in the execution of Jesus Christ. Agrippa would have been as suspicious of the followers of Jesus as was Antipas. So, a new persecution arose; James was martyred, and Peter was thrown into prison. Peter made a miraculous escape from prison and went down to Caesarea (12:1-19).

PAUL, THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Acts 11:25-26 marks a major turning point for the book of Acts and for church history: “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

From Acts 13 forward, the central focus of the story is on Paul’s missionary journeys and the impact those journeys had on:

1. **Fulfilling the will of God concerning the Great Commission of the church**
And
2. Shaping the future of the church away from being **a sect of Judaism to being a Gentile church** built solely upon the teachings of Jesus Christ instead of Mosaic Law.

No individual, apart from Jesus Christ himself, shaped the history of Christianity like the apostle Paul. When Paul is first introduced, he is standing with the Jews as they stoned Steven to death (Acts 7:58). After Steven’s death, Saul’s intense persecution of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3) contributed in large part to the scattering of the church and Philip’s flight to Samaria.

After Paul is converted and was filled with the Holy Spirit, his preaching of the gospel in the synagogues at Damascus confounded the Jews. His training under one of the greatest Jewish rabbis of the day made him a fierce advocate for the Lord as he used his command of the Jewish Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Saul the persecutor of the church became Paul the hunted promoter of the faith. He was forced to flee Damascus to save his life from the Jews who are plotting to kill him. Upon his return to Jerusalem, the disciples of Jesus were reluctant to accept his conversion as genuine, but once he gained access to them, they realized he was truly a changed person. Paul remained with the disciples and earned the reputation as a powerful campaigner for the name of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem as he had been in Damascus (Acts 9:26-30). Eventually Paul had to flee from Jerusalem because another plot to kill him was discovered there. Paul returned to his native Tarsus.

By the time Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch, it had become a vital center of the new religion of the followers of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To the Ends of the Earth (13:1 – 28:31)**PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (13:1 – 14:28)**

“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:1–3)

Beginning in Acts 13, Luke records how the center of gravity in the church was shifting away from Jerusalem and a strictly Jewish sect of followers of Jesus of Nazareth to an international, multicultural, and multiracial body of believers. The first thing we recognize about the church in Antioch is **the diversity of backgrounds**. The only thing these men had in common was their faith in Christ. From this group, the Holy Spirit selects Paul and Barnabas “for the work to which I have called them.” So Paul and Barnabas with John Mark to assist them, set off on the first of his three missionary journeys.

This first mission set the pattern that Paul would follow on each of the journeys recorded by Luke:

1. **The Holy Spirit** would lead him on when and where to go.
2. He followed the **communication routs** of the Roman Empire – the system of Roman roads and sea routes made travel easier
3. He visited **key population and cultural centers** to reach as many people as possible.
4. He went to cities with **synagogues**, speaking first to the Jews in hopes that they would see Jesus as the Messiah and help spread the Good News to everyone.

This first mission was a great success (Acts 14:26-28). Paul and Barnabas reported that the gospel was being received “in large numbers” throughout Asia Minor (14:21), but not without trials, and great opposition. On their way back to Antioch, they strengthened and encouraged the new disciples to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (14:22).

This new influx of Gentiles into the ranks of the church was not welcomed by all. The report of Gentile believers created a **crisis in the church**: should Gentile believers be circumcised and obey Mosaic Laws observed by their Jewish brethren, or were they saved apart from observing the tenants of Judaism? A council was called in Jerusalem, and the questions were settled: Gentiles were not obligated to keep Mosaic Law to be saved. Salvation was by grace through faith in

the finished work of Jesus Christ on behalf of all sinners. (See HANDOUT “The Jerusalem Council Decides the Future of Christianity”) Once the issue of Gentiles and the Law was settled (15:1-35), Paul was able to set out on his next journey and openly preach the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile as the way and means to salvation.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (15:36 – 18:22)

The most significant event of Paul's second journey was his “Macedonian Call” from the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:6-10). Paul and his companions had revisited the places where churches were planted on their first mission. But the Holy Spirit kept leading them towards Troas, the westernmost point of Asia Minor. At Troas, Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man begging him to “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, they left immediately for Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel to the Greeks.

A second significant thing about Paul's Second Missionary Journey is that it is on this mission that Paul shifts the focus of his work from “the Jew first” and goes directly to the Gentiles, bypassing the Jews (Acts 18:6). The Macedonian Call demonstrates how the Holy Spirit was directing His missionaries to leave Asia Minor and take the Gospel to the Gentiles in the rest of the Roman Empire and beyond. Paul's experiences in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth convince him that the Gentile world was ready to receive the Gospel, while the Jews were only increasing their stubborn resistance to the preaching of the Gospel Paul and the other missionaries were preaching.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (18:23 – 21:16)

Paul wrote, “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.” (Ephesians 3:7-9).

By the time Paul departed from Antioch on his Third Missionary Journey, he was certain of his calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul visited churches across Asia Minor and ended up in Ephesus: “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (Ac 19:10). Paul's stay in Ephesus brought many to Christ. However, his witness and the witnesses of the growing numbers of believers in the city began to threaten the idol worshipers and caused them to riot (Acts 19:23-41).

TRIP TO ROME (21:17 – 28:31)

Acts closes with Paul on trial amongst the Gentiles. The riot at Ephesus had forced Paul to leave to Macedonia. After an important stop to encourage the Ephesian Elders and bid them farewell (Acts 20:17-38), Paul set his face towards Jerusalem. By this time, Paul was known everywhere for his ministry to the Gentiles. The Jews hated Paul for accepting Gentiles into what was still treated as a Jewish cult. His trip to Jerusalem ended as was prophesied (Acts 21:11-14); as soon as they saw Paul at the Temple, the Jews attacked him, and the Roman authorities arrested him for causing a riot. The drama of Paul's arrest, trials, and shipwreck on the way to Rome closes the book. Acts ends with Paul in the heart of Rome, a witness for the Gospel in chains and awaiting trial before Caesar's court.

KEYS TO ACTS

- **The rapid Growth and expansion of the church.** This rapid growth is all the doing of the Holy Spirit, driving the church forward, and opening the doors of salvation to the Gentiles. (See HANDOUT “The Message of Christ the Lord is Proclaimed to the Ends of the Earth”).
- **The door closes on the Jews** being the instrument through which God brings His salvation to the world. The Jews' increasing hostility to the church, and the attempts by Jewish believers to put Gentiles under the Law of Moses cannot stop or sidetrack the church. God Himself, by His Holy Spirit falling on the church at Pentecost, breached the walls that separated the Jews and Gentiles. The Council at Jerusalem confirmed what the Holy Spirit was doing amongst the Gentiles, and then Paul and the other missionaries were set free by the Holy Spirit to preach to the Gentiles.
- **Acts ends abruptly.** The story was not finished, and it is still being written to this very day. The Church throughout history was and still is a part of the story that Luke started to tell in Acts.

Questions for Lesson Twelve

1. Review the story of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. How does it compare with the story of Pentecost in Acts 2?
2. What role does the persecution of the church play in the expansion of the church in Acts?
3. What do Paul's missionary journeys tell us about the cost of obeying Christ's command to “go” and preach the gospel to the nations?
4. The book of Acts ends abruptly. What does that tell us about the church today and what Christians should be doing until Christ returns?



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Books Written by Frederick Osborn

1. *Church Planting Movements – India*
2. *Daniel: Kingdoms in Conflict*
3. *Deceived! Overcoming the Age of Mass Deception*
4. *Disciple-to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus*
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9. *From Genesis to Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation Through the Old Testament Scriptures*
10. *Healing Miracles of the Bible*
11. *Jesus Over India: A 52 Week Spiritual Journey Through the Heart of India*
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19. *Our Jehovah Rapha: A Christ Centered Holistic Approach to Wellness*
20. *Reviving A Nation*
21. *Seven Laws of Dying to Self*
22. *Spiritual Lessons for the Grafted-In*
23. *The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible*
24. *The Blood*
25. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements*
26. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements- Study Guide*
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28. *The Gospel of Salvation*
29. *The Gospel of Salvation: Study Guide*
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32. *The Keys to Effective Prayer*
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36. *The Physics of Heaven: The Theology of the New Apostolic Reformation*
37. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King*
38. *The Spirit of Religion*
39. *The Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah*
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Supplemental Handout Materials

HANDOUT NT 201-1

Canon: What is the Bible?

How did Christians first decide which books belonged in the Bible? When we ask this question, we raise the issue of canon. The word canon comes from the ancient Semitic word for a “reed” or “measuring stick.” It signifies a measuring standard to which the biblical writings themselves must conform.

TESTS FOR CANONICITY: Author, Audience, and Application

TEST #1: Written by a prophet or prophetically gifted person.

For the New Testament, must be written by an Apostle or by someone known to be personally disciplined by one of the Apostles.

The Holy Spirit of God had to have His hand on the author.

TEST #2: Writing must be universal in application.

Written to all Christians of all generations, not to a particular group, Denomination or sect.

If a book is God’s word, it must be relevant to all people of all times.

TEST #3: Written in accord with previous revelation.

God’s word remains consistent and nothing in one part of God’s word would ever contradict any other part of God’s word. It is important to understand that the New Testament Scriptures do not nullify or contradict the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures). Before for the New Testament was officially canonized, only the Hebrew Scriptures were universally accepted for all believers in Jesus Christ.

HANDOUT
NT 201-1

FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CANON

- Jewish tradition credits the scribe, Ezra with collecting, arranging and preserving the books of the Old Testament during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.
- The Talmud, a large collection of writings, containing a full account of the civil and religious laws of the Jews, recognized the same books of the Old Testament as canon.
- Jesus (Luke 24:27, 44-48) and the Apostles accepted the structure and the authority of the Old Testament.
- The respected Jewish historian, Josephus, listed all the books of Jewish canon.
- The Academy of Jamnia (c. 90 AD) – confirmed the same Canon of books of the Hebrew Scriptures accepted by Christians as authoritative. (Note: Even though there is no longer a scholarly consensus as to when the Jewish canon was set, the outcomes attributed to the “Council of Jamnia” did occur – whether gradually or in a single, definitive, authoritative council.

THE APOCRYPHA

A group of materials or books composed between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. They were translated into the Greek at the same time as the Hebrew Old Testament and were included in the Greek translation known as the SEPTUAGINT. As a result many Christians read these works and in the course of time came to regard them as part of the Old Testament. The disagreements over the canonicity of these writings began long before the Protestant reformers decided to accept only the Hebrew translations as Old Testament canon. Although most Roman Catholic and Orthodox scholars embrace the apocryphal (or deuterocanonical) books as genuine parts of Scripture, they place them on a lower level of authority than the first-order canonical books. Protestant scholars acknowledge these writings as containing much that is useful and spiritually satisfying, but they do not regard them as Holy Scripture.

HANDOUT
NT 201-1**Inspiration: How the New Testament Was Written**

We know that God’s Spirit worked through the human authors to inspire the sacred writings of the Bible. In many places the Bible affirms that God’s involvement often extended to the very words the writers chose. Therefore, both human and divine elements exist in Scripture.

- Note: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NIV *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
- Jeremiah, Isaiah and all the prophets said – “The LORD spoke to me...” or “The LORD said...”
- Also 2 Peter 1:20, 21 NIV *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

How exactly did God’s Spirit work with the human authors to inspire the Scriptures? What role did the human authors play in the writing of Scripture? Different theories have been proposed by theologians to answer these questions. The four most common theories of Bible Inspiration are:

1. Neo-orthodoxy – states that the ultimate reality of the Godhead is totally beyond human comprehension. Therefore, we can know only what God chooses to reveal about Himself. The people of ancient times expressed their understanding of God as best they could, but their reports were subjective and filled with paradoxes and errors. The neo-orthodox theory accepts the New Testament as a *witness* to the words of Jesus, or as a document *contains* the words of God, but does not accept it as the actual word of God transmitted through human agents.

CRITICISM: If the words of the New Testament are to be believed then, the Bible must be accepted as more than a witness to God’s word: it is in fact, God’s word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible says clearly that God revealed His word to His people who faithfully recorded His messages; if it is anything less, then its truthfulness is in question.

2. Dictation Theory: states that God chose certain individuals and dictated His word to them. God gave the writers of the New Testament the exact words He wanted to use and the writers wrote only what God dictated to them.

CRITICISM: Sometimes God did communicate a precise, word-for-word message to one of His prophets (Note: Jer. 26:2; Rv. 2: 1,8; and Hab. 2:2), but we see in the Old Testament books of poetry and wisdom, and especially in the New Testament’s Epistles that God allowed the writers to express their own personalities as they wrote. The Holy Spirit insured

the finished work accurately communicated God's message. Thus the dictation theory can account only for those verses that specifically quote the Lord.

3. The Limited Inspiration Theory: this view holds that God inspired the *thoughts* of the New Testament writers, but not necessarily the exact words they chose. But because they expressed God's message in their own way, they may have included errors in historical details and made statements that are hard to reconcile with other books of the Bible written at different times by different authors. Those who accept this theory believe the Holy Spirit inspired only the doctrinal portions of Scripture so that God's message of salvation would be protected.

CRITICISM: The Bible does contain many stories that may be difficult to accept as history, but our response does not have to be to always retreat and admit error whenever archeology or modern science challenges the Bible. New archaeological finds confirm much of the biblical record, and there is no reason to subject God's word to ever-changing human science; Christians can trust in the entire Word of God and await further evidence to clarify the difficulties.

4. Plenary Verbal Inspiration Theory: this theory asserts that God's inspiration extends to *all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation*. ("Plenary" = "full" or "complete"; "verbal" refers to the words of Scripture). Verbal inspiration means God's inspiration extended to the very words the writers chose. The writers' own personalities were reflected in the words they chose, but the Holy Spirit so guided the process that the words they chose accurately conveyed the meaning God intended. God guided the writers no less when they recorded historical details than when they discussed doctrinal matters. Therefore, any apparent contradictions with human knowledge of history or science should be reconciled in favor of Scripture.

The Verbal Inspiration Theory Is the Only Theory That Recognizes Both the Human Element in Scripture and Affirms the Holy Spirit as the Bible's Ultimate Author.

- The Verbal Inspiration Theory means the Bible is trustworthy. We can trust it to provide reliable information about the history of God's people and also describes God's plan for the world and for our lives.
- The Verbal Inspiration Theory means the Bible is authoritative. Because it is God's word, it speaks with God's authority. The Bible remains God's truth whether or not anyone chooses to accept it.

"...Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Deut. 32:46,47 NIV

HANDOUT
NT 201-1

“What is Biblical Inerrancy?”

Biblical inerrancy is the doctrinal position that, in its original form, the Bible is totally without error and free from all contradiction. The Bible is complete and accurate, including the historical and scientific parts. Biblical inerrancy defines the Bible as Holy Scripture and the Word of God. Every doctrine of the Bible carries with it the full authority of God, and therefore requires of the Christian full agreement. Every prophecy of the Bible calls for unshakable trust in its fulfillment. The commands of the Bible are the directives of God Himself and therefore demand willing obedience. **Biblical inerrancy means the Bible contains everything that the Christian needs to know in order to obtain salvation and live a Christian life.**

It has only been in recent church history that biblical inerrancy has become an issue. In fact, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy was formalized only in the last two centuries as a defense against the liberal theologians' increasing attacks upon Bible's accuracy and infallibility. The skepticism of modern Western philosophy along with the advancement of evolutionary science, created an intellectual revolt against biblical revelation that centered upon a direct assault upon biblical infallibility and inerrancy. The liberal theologians scoffed at the idea that abandoning the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture would be the thread that would unravel the church; they refused to believe that once a man disregards the ultimate truthfulness of the Bible, then anything can become justifiable. But as the doubts about the Bible's accuracy and infallibility spread across Europe and America, the church in the West lost its credibility; and just as predicted, spiritual anarchy now rules in the West.

Biblical inerrancy is a critical doctrine for Christianity. Without the accuracy and authority of the Word of God to guide us, anything can and will be justifiable and we will see the same spiritual condition rule in the church that ruled in Israel in the time of the Judges: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* (Judges 21:25). Biblical inerrancy answers the question, “How do we know the Bible text is accurate?” and restores to the church the confidence in the Bible as the word of God.

We know the Bible text is accurate because of the faithful work of hundreds of individuals over many generations. These individuals, called scribes, copied God's word by hand, taking great care to maintain its accuracy. Scribes played a crucial role in the ancient world:

- Scribes recorded the king's edicts.
- Scribes recorded every important business transaction.
- Administrative officials counted on scribes to record important documents.

Scribes were trained to maintain the highest degree of accuracy because mistakes could have serious consequences – political, economic, or otherwise.

THE MASORETES

The Masoretes (A.D. 500-1000) were one of the most important groups of ancient Jewish scribes. They believed they were copying the very words of God and took great care to preserve the copies they had received. They received their name from *masora*, a complex system of markings they developed to ensure accurate transmission of the Hebrew texts of the Bible.

THREE STEPS THE MASORETES TOOK TO ENSURE TEXTUAL ACCURACY:

1. They developed a system for writing vowels.
2. They developed a system of accents (helped in pronouncing the text, but also showed the relationship of various words and phrases in a sentence to each other.
3. They developed a system of detailed notes on the text (provided a means to check the accuracy of a copied text).

Hebrew word for “scribe” is “counter” and the Masoretes counted everything in the text to ensure accuracy:

- They knew that the Torah contained 400,945 letters.
- They knew the Torah’s middle word and its middle letter.

HANDOUT
NT 201-2

THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

NAME	POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS	NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS
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Pharisees	Were committed to obeying All of God’s commands	Behaved as though their own religious rules were just as Important as God’s rules for living
	Were admired by the common People for their apparent piety	Their piety was often hypocritical, and their efforts often forced others to try to live up to standards even the Pharisees did not live up to
	Believed in a bodily resurrection and eternal life	Believed that salvation came from perfect obedience to the law and was not based upon forgiveness
	Believed in angels and demons	Became so obsessed with obeying their legal interpretations in every detail that they completely ignored God’s message of mercy and grace

Were more concerned with appearing to be good than obeying God

Sadducees	Believed strongly in the Mosaic law and in Levitical Purity and were more practically minded than the Pharisees	Relied on logic while placing little importance on faith
	Did not believe in a bodily resurrection or eternal life Did not believe in angels or demons	Did not believe all the Old Testament was God’s Word

Were often willing to compromise their values with the Romans and others in order to maintain their status and influential positions

(From “Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts and Maps”, Tyndale House Publishers, 2001)

HANDOUT
NT 201-2

The Socratic Method: Fostering Critical Thinking

By Peter Conor

<https://tilt.colostate.edu/the-socratic-method/>

"Do not take what I say as if I were merely playing, for you see the subject of our discussion—and on what subject should even a man of slight intelligence be more serious? —namely, what kind of life should one live . . ."Socrates

This teaching tip explores how the Socratic Method can be used to promote critical thinking in classroom discussions. It is based on the article, The Socratic Method: What it is and How to Use it in the Classroom, published in the newsletter, Speaking of Teaching, a publication of the Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).

The article summarizes a talk given by Political Science professor Rob Reich, on May 22, 2003, as part of the center's Award Winning Teachers on Teaching lecture series. Reich, the recipient of the 2001 Walter J. Gores Award for Teaching Excellence, describes four essential components of the Socratic method and urges his audience to "creatively reclaim [the method] as a relevant framework" to be used in the classroom.

What is the Socratic Method?

Developed by the Greek philosopher, Socrates, the Socratic Method is a dialogue between teacher and students, instigated by the continual probing questions of the teacher, in a concerted effort to explore the underlying beliefs that shape the students views and opinions. Though often misunderstood, most Western pedagogical tradition, from Plato on, is based on this dialectical method of questioning.

An extreme version of this technique is employed by the infamous professor, Dr. Kingsfield, portrayed by John Houseman in the 1973 movie, "The Paper Chase." In order to get at the heart of ethical dilemmas and the principles of moral character, Dr. Kingsfield terrorizes and humiliates his law students by painfully grilling them on the details and implications of legal cases.

In his lecture, Reich describes a kinder, gentler Socratic Method, pointing out the following:

Socratic inquiry is not "teaching" per se. It does not include PowerPoint driven lectures, detailed lesson plans or rote memorization. The teacher is neither "the sage on the stage" nor "the guide on the side." The students are not passive recipients of knowledge.

The Socratic Method involves a shared dialogue between teacher and students. The teacher leads by posing thought-provoking questions. Students actively engage by asking questions of their own. The discussion goes back and forth.

The Socratic Method says Reich, "is better used to demonstrate complexity, difficulty, and uncertainty than to elicit facts about the world." The aim of the questioning is to probe the

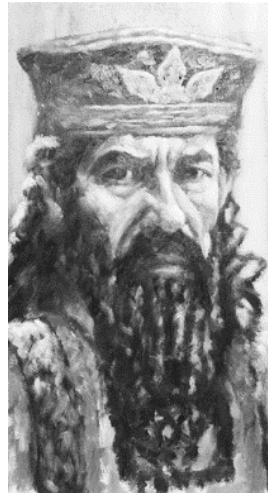
underlying beliefs upon which each participant's statements, arguments and assumptions are built.

The classroom environment is characterized by "productive discomfort," not intimidation. The Socratic professor does not have all the answers and is not merely "testing" the students. The questioning proceeds open-ended with no pre-determined goal.

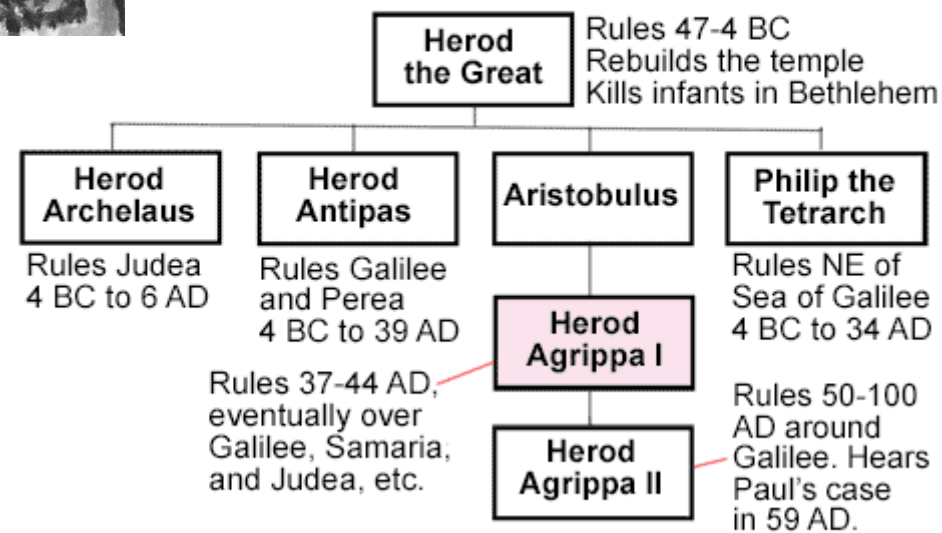
The focus is not on the participants' statements but on the value system that underpins their beliefs, actions, and decisions. For this reason, any successful challenge to this system comes with high stakes—one might have to examine and change one's life, but, Socrates is famous for saying, "the unexamined life is not worth living."

"The Socratic professor," Reich states, "is not the opponent in an argument, nor someone who always plays devil's advocate, saying essentially: 'If you affirm it, I deny it. If you deny it, I affirm it.' This happens sometimes, but not as a matter of pedagogical principle."

HANDOUT
NT 201-2



The Herodian Dynasty
(much abbreviated)



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HANDOUT
NT 201-4

The question, “Did Jesus cast the demons from two men or one man into the swine?” has created doubts in the minds of believers concerning the accuracy of the Gospel accounts. A casual reading of Matthew 8:28-33; Mark 5:1-16 and Luke 8:26-39 will lead the non-believer to conclude that the Bible stories are myth and not historical/biographical.

However, keeping in mind that the Gospels were written by missionaries not historians; and therefore, their motivations for relating specific facts about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ were to convince their readers that Jesus of Nazareth was who they said He was – the Son of God and savior of the whole world.

So, is there a way to harmonize the three accounts? The answer is yes, of course because these were firsthand eyewitness accounts written down for all those who were not there to see it for themselves.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all relate the same story of Jesus casting out demons from a man (or two men) and sending them into a herd of swine which then goes mad, panic, and run over a cliff, drowning all the pigs in the process. Matthew claims that there were two men, and that the event took place in the country of the Gadarenes. Luke and Mark only mention one man and locate the event in the country of the Gerasenes. It would be easiest to just dismiss both accounts as made up, but a brief study of the two names used to identify the location of this miracle will lead the student to conclude that these were not two separate events in two different places, but that "the country of the Gerasenes" and "the country of the Gadarenes" are in fact the same place. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* states, “Gergesa was a small village, and little known, the evangelists, who wrote for more distant readers, spoke of the event as taking place in the country of the Gadarenes, so named from its largest city, Gadara; and this country included the country of the Gergesenes as a state includes a county. The Gerasenes were the people of the district of which Gerasa was the capital. This city was better known than Gadara or Gergesa; indeed in the Roman age no city of Palestine was better known.”

The answer to the question of one or two demoniacs requires a deeper dive into the immediate audiences of the men who wrote their Gospels. Matthew’s primary audience was Jewish; he ends his account with the herdsmen fleeing and with those in the immediate vicinity coming out to meet and speak with him. Matthew’s account indicates nothing about what happened to the demoniac after the demons were exorcised. In contrast, the other two accounts make the fate of the demoniac who wanted to follow Jesus the main point of the miracle.

It is easy to see that there were in fact, two demoniacs, but only one of them wanted to follow Jesus after the demons were exorcised. Matthew’s Jewish audience would have been most interested in how the exorcism demonstrated Jesus’ Messianic power over the demons. Matthew mentions both demoniacs to emphasize further Jesus' power for good over evil. Luke’s and Mark’s intention was to concentrate on the one demoniac (a Gentile) that believed and wanted to follow Jesus. They included the story of the demoniac who responded positively to being saved by Jesus Christ to encourage their mostly Greek/Roman Gentile audiences who believed to “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” (Mk 5:20).

HANDOUT
NT 201-4**Jesus Teaches On Love (*agape*)**

When asked, “which is the greatest commandment” (Matthew 22:36; Mark 12:28), Jesus answered from the Law itself: “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). Then He added from Leviticus 19:18, the second greatest commandment, “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29–31).

In all of His teachings about the Law, Jesus emphasized the inward attitude of the heart above an outward show of conformity. For Jesus, love, mercy, and forgiveness were the keys to righteous living. Jesus reminded those who had forgotten, that from the beginning, the Law of Moses called God’s chosen people to love Him and their neighbors as the key to obedience. Jesus, always in perfect alignment with His Father’s heart, saw that all of the commandments rested upon two simple commands: love God and love others as we love ourselves.

Other teachings of Jesus about love include:

- We must give love to others sacrificially. (Matthew 5:40–42; 10:42)
- God’s unconditional love means He loves His enemies and shows mercy to those who hate him; and we should do the same. (Matthew 5:43–47; Luke 6:35)
- We are not to love earthly belongings or anything else more than God. (Matthew 6:19–24)
- God must be our first (supreme) love and above all others, including ourselves (Matthew 10:37–39; Luke 14:25–33)
- Because God loves us, he will take care of our needs (Matthew 6:25–34)
- We should love God with all our heart (Matthew 22:37)
- We are not to love selfish ambition and the praise of men more than God. (Matthew 23:6)
- Jesus’ love extends to each individual. (Luke 15:1–7)
- God seeks and saves those who are lost and alienated from Him. (Luke 19:9–10; John 10:11–15)
- Jesus proved his love for us by dying on the cross so that we could live forever in heaven with Him. (John 3:14–16; 15:13–14)
- God loves all who are in the world (John 3:16)

- The love of God the Father for Jesus his Son makes them One (John 5:19–23)
- Those who refuse to believe in Jesus do not have God’s love in them. (John 5:41–44)
- Jesus loves God and lays down His life to glorify His Father as Jesus is glorified by the Father. (John 10:17; 14:31; 17:1–5)
- We must love one another. (John 13:34, 35)
- We show that we love God when we obey Him. (John 14:21; 15:10).
- Jesus loves us the same way that the Father loves Him. (John 15:9)
- Jesus wants us to love him even through the most difficult times. (John 16:19–24)
- God wants the world to know He loves them; and He sends His disciples into the world to tell everyone. (John 17:23)
- The love between God and Jesus is the perfect example of how we are to love one another. (John 17:21–26)
- Jesus wants our love for Him to be genuine. (John 21:15–23)

HANDOUT
NT 201-04

The Parables of Jesus

“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 13:34, 35

<i>PARABLE</i>	<i>THEME</i>	<i>SCRIPTURE</i>
1. The Sower	A Key Parable (Mark 4:13); Individual responses to the Word	Matt. 13:3-8; 18-23 Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8
2. The Wheat & Tares	Sons of the Kingdom & Sons of the evil one	Matt. 13:24-30
3. The Mustard Seed	The Kingdom begins insignificantly but grows to greatness	Matt. 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18, 19
4. The Leaven	Inner transformation of citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21
5. The Hidden Treasure	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:44
6. The Pearl	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:45, 46
7. The Dragnet	Wicked separated from the righteous at the end of the age	Matt. 13:47-50
8. The Unforgiving Servant	Kingdom forgiveness	Matt. 18:23-35
9. The Landowner	Grace (Unmerited favor) of God Extended to citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 20:1-16
10. The Two sons	Kingdom obedience	Matt. 21:28-32
11. The Wicked Tenants	Kingdom rejected	Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
12. The Marriage Feast	Invitation rejected & extended; God clothes those who respond	Matt. 22:1-14
13. The Wise and Foolish Virgins	Watch for the arrival of the Bridegroom	Matt. 25:1-13
14. The Talents	Kingdom stewardship	Matt. 25:14-30

15. The Growing Seed	God produces the growth	Mark 4:26-29
16. The Two Debtors	He who is forgiven little loves little	Luke 7:41-43
17. The Good Samaritan	True religion of the Kingdom	Luke 10:25-37
18. The Friend in Need	Persistence in the Kingdom	Luke 11:5-8
19. The Rich Fool	Inadequacy of earthly wealth	Luke 12:16-21(Luke 12:22-34)
20. The Fruitless Fig Tree	Period of Grace will come to an end	Luke 13:6-9
21. Kingdom Lessons	The way up is the way down; Invite those who cannot repay (Note:16-24 Proverbs 19:17); those who refuse God's Invitation will be excluded	Luke 14:7-11; 12-14; 16 – 24
22. The Lost Sheep	God's love for the lost	Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7 Luke 15:8-10
23. The Lost Coin	God's love for the lost	Luke 15:11-32
24. The Lost (Prodigal) Son	God's love for the lost	Luke 16:1-9
25. The Shrewd Steward	God and Mammon	Luke 16:19-31
26. Rich Man & Lazarus	Our action in this life have eternal consequences	Luke 17:1-10
27. The Unworthy Slaves	Faith or Obedience	Luke 18:1-8
28. The Unrighteous Judge	Contrast with God's justice for His Elect	Luke 18:10-14
29. The Pharisee and The Tax Collector	Self-righteous are not justified	Luke 19:12-27
30. The Ten Minas	Use what God has given or lose it	Matt. 31:46
31. The Sheep and Goats	The Last Judgment	

HANDOUT
NT 201-8

The Marginal Members of Society Jesus Reached Out To

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus more often reaches out to "marginal" members of society:

- **Poor People** (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2-3)
- **Lepers** (5:12-16; 7:22; 17:12-19)
- **Tax Collectors and Sinners** (5:27-32; 7:29-35; 15:1; 18:10-14; 19:2-10; cf. 3:12)
- **Widows** (2:36-38; 4:25-26; 7:11-16; 18:2-8; 20:47; 21:1-4)

Other Women and Children

Several narratives of Jesus healing the sick or raising the dead are unique to Luke's Gospel:

- **Widow at Nain** (7:11-17)
- **Crippled Woman** (13:10-17)
- **Man with Dropsy** (14:1-6)
- **Ten Lepers** (17:11-19)

Luke's Gospel also has stories and parables involving foreigners and Samaritans that are not found in the other Gospels:

- **Widow of Zarephath & Namaan the Syrian** (brief mentions in 4:25-27)
- **Samaritan Villagers** (9:51-56)
- **Parable of Good Samaritan** (10:29-37)
- **Ten lepers, one a Samaritan** (17:11-19)

HANDOUT
NT 201-9

“The Sevens in John”

The number seven is a sacred number to God’s people; it represents spiritual perfection, for it is the heavenly number in Scripture. Whether by conscious design or by the unconscious leading of the Holy Spirit, John’s gospel is formed around three sets of seven (three, being the number that stands for that which is real, substantial, and complete). So the Gospel of John reveals Jesus Christ in His complete, spiritual perfection.

The Sevens in John		
SEVEN DISCOURSES	SEVEN MIRACLES	SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS
1. New Birth (3:1-36)	1. Water into Wine (2:1-11)	1. Bread of Life (6:35-51)
2. Water of Life (4:1-42)	2. Healing the Official’s Son (4:43-54)	2. Light of the World (8:12 – 9:5)
3. Son of Man (5:19-47)	3. Healing the Lame Man (5:1-16)	3. Gate for the Sheep (10:7-9)
4. Bread of Life (6:22-66)	4. Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14)	4. Good Shepherd (10:11-14)
5. Rivers of Living Water (7:1-52)	5. Walking on Water (6:16-21)	5. Resurrection & Life (11:35)
6. Light of the World (8:12-59)	6. Healing the Blind Man (9:1-12)	6. Way, Truth & Life (14:6)
7. Good Shepherd (10:1-42)	7. Raising Lazarus From Grave (11:1-46)	7. True Vine (15:1-5)

HANDOUT
NT 201-9

The Claims of Christ

Those who read the life of Christ are faced with one unavoidable question—was Jesus God? Part of any reasonable conclusion has to include the fact that he did claim to be God. We have no other choice but to agree or disagree with his claim. Eternal life is at stake in the choice.

Jesus claimed to be:	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies	5:17 14:33 16:16, 17; 26:31, 53-56 27:43	14:21, 61-62	4:16-21 7:18-23 18:31 22:37 24:44	2:22 5:45-47 6:45 7:40 10:34-36 13:18 15:25 20:9
The Son of Man	8:20 12:8 16:27; 19:28 20:18-19 24:27, 44 25:31 26:2, 45, 64	8:31, 38; 9:9; 10:45; 14:41	6:22; 7:33-34; 12:8; 17:22; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:36	1:51; 3:13-14; 6:27, 53; 12:23, 34
The Son of God	11:27 14:33 16:16-17 27:43	3:11-12 14:61-62	8:28 10:22	1:18 3:35-36 5:18-26 6:40 10:36 11:4 17:1 19:7
The Messiah / the Christ	23:9-10 26:63-64	8:29-30	4:41 23:1-2 24:25-27	4:25-26 10:24-25 11:27
Teacher / Master	26:18			13:13-14
One with authority to forgive.		2:1-12	7:48-49	
Lord		5:19		13:13-14 20:28-29
Savior			19:10	3:17 10:9

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HANDOUT
NT 201-10

Why Is LORD Capitalized in Some Bibles?

By: Danielle Bernock
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<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/why-is-lord-capitalized-in-some-bibles.html>

The first thing to know about the word “lord” in the Bible is that it’s not just one word in the original language. The three varying presentations of the word (lord, Lord, LORD) are to differentiate between them.

Why Is LORD Capitalized in Some Bibles?

When reading the Bible, the word “lord” can be found in three different forms: LORD, Lord, and lord. The complete capitalization, standard capitalization, and non-capitalization isn’t consistent within all the various translations either. One could easily become confused by these seeming discrepancies.

- Why is Lord capitalized sometimes and sometimes not?
- Why is it in all capitals in some translations and not in others?
- Why is there such a difference in the capitalization of the single word lord?

Single Word Three Ways

The first thing to know about the word “lord” in the Bible is that it’s not just one word in the original language. The three varying presentations of the word are to differentiate between them.

The Word lord. When the word “lord” is found in all lower-case letters, it’s representing the word ‘*ādōwn*, aw-done’, or (shortened) ‘*ādōn*’; from an unused root (meaning to rule).

The usage of this word is referring to men and not to God. For example, in Genesis 31:35, Rachel uses it when addressing her father, “Rachel said to her father, ‘Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I'm having my period.’ So he searched but could not find the household gods.”

In modern terms, we can understand this usage of lord as a male boss or an authority figure. The word we use today is sir.

The Word Lord. When the word “Lord” is found in standard capitalization, it’s representing the word *’ādônây*, ad-o-noy’, the Lord (used as a proper name of God only): (my) Lord. Two examples here are when David is addressing God.

- I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples (Psalm 57:9).
- And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant (2 Samuel, 7:28 NKJV).

This can be compared to how we speak to God today using the name Jesus, or Father.

The Word LORD. When the word LORD is found in all capital letters, it’s representing the word *yeh-ho-vaw’*; (the) self-Existent or Eternal, the Jewish national name of God. Transliterating the word from Hebrew to English we get the letters *yhwh* or *jhvh*. This is what is called a *Tetragrammaton*, meaning four letters or four consonants.

The Jews held this name of God as sacred and did not pronounce it. Scribes later inserted vowels giving us the names “Yahweh” and “Jehovah.” Here are three examples of its usage:

- This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens (Genesis 2:4).
- The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day (Genesis 18:1).
- A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing (Psalm 23:1).

Using the complete capitalization of LORD is to convey the proper name, or title for God as complete Creator and ever present one. In Other Words: There are times when the words are translated differently. This is generally in an effort to convey greater clarity and understanding.

Some translations use the word “sir” instead of “lord”, or my “lords.” For example, this verse with Rachel speaking to her father:

- Rachel said to her father, “Do not be angry with me, sir, but I am not able to stand up in your presence; I am having my monthly period.” Laban searched but did not find his household gods (Genesis 31:35, GNT).

The American Standard Version uses the word Jehovah instead of LORD.

- And Jehovah appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; (Genesis 18:1, ASV).

You can find the Hebrew *Tetragrammaton* sometimes translated into four different words: “LORD”, “Jehovah”, “Yahweh”, and “Lord”. For example, here in Genesis 15:1:

- After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” (NIV).
- After these things the word of Jehovah came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward” (DBT).
- After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Don't be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (WEB).
- Now when these things were done, the word of the Lord came to Abram by a vision, saying: “Fear not, Abram, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great” (DRB).

All these translations point to the original meaning. The best way to know if you’re understanding the scriptures correctly is to study them and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

HANDOUT
NT 201-10

JESUS TEACHES ON HIS IDENTITY AND HIS MISSION

- **Jesus taught He was fulfilling Old Testament Prophecy**

Matthew 14:33; 16:16, 17; 26:31, 53-56
 Mark 14:21, 61, 62
 Luke 4:16-21; 7:18-23; 18:31; 22:37; 24:44
 John 2:22; 5:45-47; 6:45; 10:34-36; 13:18; 15:25

- **Jesus called Himself the “Son of Man”**

Matthew 8:20; 12:8; 16:27; 19:28; 20:18, 19; 24:27, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 45, 64
 Mark 8:31, 38; 9:9; 10:45; 14:41
 Luke 6:22; 7:33, 34; 12:8; 17:22; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:36
 John 1:51; 3:13, 14; 6:27, 53; 12:23, 34

- **Jesus called Himself the “Son of God”**

Matthew 11:27; 16:16, 17; 27:43
 Mark 14:61, 62
 Luke 10:22
 John 5:18-26; 6:40; 10:36; 11:4; 17:1; 19:7

- **Jesus called Himself the “Messiah/Christ”**

Matthew 23:9, 10; 26:63, 64
 Mark 8:29, 30
 Luke 23:1, 2; 24:25-27
 John 4:25, 26; 10:24, 25

- **Jesus called Himself “Teacher/Master”**

Matthew 26:18
 John 13:13, 14

- **Jesus taught He had the Divine authority to forgive sins**

Mark 2:1-12
 Luke 7:48,49

- **Jesus called Himself, Lord**

Mark 5:19
 John 13:13, 14; 20:28

- **Jesus called Himself Savior**

Luke 19:10
 John 3:17; 10:9

HANDOUT
NT 201-10

THE MEANING OF SALVATION by Daniel B. Pecota

With regard to the concept of ‘save,’ ‘rescue,’ or ‘deliver,’ the lexical richness evident in the Old Testament does not occur in the New Testament. It uses primarily the word *sózó*, - meaning ‘save,’ ‘preserve,’ or ‘rescue from danger’ – and its forms...

Sózó, can refer to saving one from physical death (Matt. 8:25; Acts 27:20, 31), from physical illness (Matt. 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19; James 5:15), from demonic possession (Luke 8:36), or from a death that has already occurred (Luke 8:50). But by far the greatest number of uses refers to spiritual salvation, which God provided through Christ (1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15) and which people experience by faith (Eph. 2:8).

Although the title ‘savior’ (Gk. *Sótér*) was attributed by the Greeks to their gods, political leaders, and others who brought honor or benefit to their people, in Christian literature it was applied only to God (1 Tim. 1:1) and to Christ (Acts 13:23; Phil. 3:20). The noun ‘salvation’ (Gk. *Sótéria*) appears forty-five times and refers almost exclusively to spiritual salvation, which is the present and future possession of all true believers. But even though the Greek words for ‘save’ or ‘salvation’ may be infrequent, Jesus himself proclaims the theme of the New Testament when He says, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save [sōsai] what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

From Systematic Theology, Stanley M. Horton, General Editor, Logion Press (Gospel Publishing House), Springfield, MO, © 1995, pp328-329

HANDOUT
NT 201-12

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES

- **Philip** was born at Bethsaida in Galilee and was one of the first disciples called by Jesus (John 1:43). He was martyred (80 A.D.?) by crucifixion. He labored diligently in Upper Asia, and suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified.
- **Matthew**, the tax collector called by Jesus (Matthew 9:9), wrote the gospel that bears his name. The places of his labors were Parthia and Ethiopia, where he suffered martyrdom, being slain with an axe in the city of Nadabah. (AD 60?)
- **Matthias**, of whom less is known than of most of the other disciples, was elected to fill the vacant place of Judas (Acts 1:26). He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded (80 A.D.?).
- **Andrew** was the brother of the Apostle Peter. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations and is believed to have preached the gospel as far as present day Scotland; on his arrival at the city of Edessa in Macedonia, he was taken and crucified on an X-cross (80 A.D.?).
- **Peter**, one of the disciples in Jesus' inner circle (along with James and John), became one of the most influential leaders of the early Church. He was condemned to death by the Emperor Nero and crucified at Rome in 67 A.D.
- **Jude**, the brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. He was crucified at Edessa (the same name, but not the same city of Andrew's death; this place is an ancient city of Mesopotamia on the site of present-day Urfa in southeast Turkey). (AD 72?)
- **Nathaniel** (a.k.a. Bartholomew) is believed to have preached in several countries. Tradition says he translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India, and propagated the Gospel in that country. He was at length cruelly beaten, flayed alive (skinned), and then beheaded; some sources locate his death at Derbend on the Caspian Sea.
- **Thomas**, called Didymus (Gr. twin), preached the Gospel in Parthia (a region in what is now northeastern Iran) and India; he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear in Mylapore, Madras, India in AD 72.
- Tradition states that **Simon**, surnamed Zelotes, preached the Gospel in Mauritania Africa, Armenia; Suanir, Persia; Edessa and even in Britain. The time and place of Simon's death is disputed.
- **John**, the "beloved disciple," was brother to James. John founded the churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira. He was arrested in Ephesus and sent to Rome, where it is believed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, but miraculously

escaped without injury. The Roman Emperor, Domitian, banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death; he died of old age in Ephesus (100 A.D.?)

- **James**, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. James was one of the early leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He was also the first martyr among the apostles. King Herod Agrippa I ordered his execution by the sword about 44 AD (Acts 12:1-2).
- **James**, the son of Alphaeus, was one of the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). By Matthew and Mark he is coupled with Thaddaeus, and by Luke and Acts with Simon Zelotes. Matthew (or Levi) is also called the son of Alphaeus (compare Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14), so it is possible that he and James were brothers, but was never specifically stated. Tradition records that James was another early martyr of the church. After being stoned by the Jews for preaching Christ, he was "buried by the Sanctuary in Jerusalem."

HANDOUT
NT 201-12

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ACTS			
You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem Chapters 1 - 7			
DEFINING EVENTS	MAIN MISSIONARY	PRIMARY AUDIENCE	TIMEFRAME
Power of the Church 1:1 – 2:47 Progress of the Church 3:1 – 8:4	Peter	Jews Jerusalem	33 – 35 A.D. (two years)
And in all Judea and Samaria Chapters 8 – 12			
Expansion of the Church 8:5 – 12:25	Philip	Witness to Judea & Samaria Samaritans	35 – 48 A.D. (13 years)
And to the end of the earth Chapters 13 – 28			
Paul’s Three Missionary Journeys (31:1 – 21:16) Paul’s Three Trials (21:17 – 28:31)	Paul	Witness to the ends of the Roman World Jews, Greeks and Romans	48 – 62 A.D. (14 years)

HANDOUT
NT 201-12

THE SAMARITANS

Philip the Evangelist’s ministry to the Samaritans did not comprise a total breakdown of separation between the Jews and their Samaritan neighbors. The Samaritans and Jews hated each other even though they shared some of the traditions and the heritage which belonged to the Hebrew patriarchs. But Samaritans were not allowed on temple grounds in Jerusalem and were often treated worse than Greeks. When the gospel started being preached to the Samaritans and many of them believed, it was a major step forward for the church which had its beginnings with the Jews.

THREE MAIN REASONS WHY THE JEWS HATED SAMARITANS

1. Their worship of God was impure (2 Kings 17:25-33)

²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded, “Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there, and let him go and dwell there and teach them the law of the god of the land.”

²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

²⁹ But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. **2 Kings 17:27-29 (ESV)**

When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-26) He diagnosed her sinful condition (4:17-18). Note Hosea chapter 2 and ask how this woman’s sins reflected the overall sinful condition of the Samaritans.

The 5 gods (husbands) of the Samaritans named in 2 Kings 17: 29-41:

- From Babylon – Succoth Benoth ("Booth of prostitution")
- From Cuthah – Nergal (hero) = Mars, the god of war "might makes right"
- From Hammath – Ahima = Pan, the god of drunkenness and gross indulgence
- From the Avvites – Nibhaz ("dog") and Tartak ("ass") a.k.a. "prince of darkness" worshiped for peace and prosperity; materialistic
- From the Sepharvites – Adrammelech & Anammelech
("Splendor") ("Reflection")
Male/virility Female/fertility

Together they represent ego and self-centeredness; an obsession with physical (fleshly attributes)

2. They were a mixed race and a mixed religious tradition

¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” **John 4:19-20 (ESV)**

2 Kings 17 indicates that the Samaritans were composed of Israelites who had been allowed to return to the land and began to intermarry with the other foreigners who were settled there by the Assyrians. This mixture was offensive to the Jews who returned from Babylonian exile and settled in Jerusalem (Ezra chapters 9 & 10; Nehemiah 9:1-3; 13:1-3).

The Samaritans regarded Mount Gerizim as the correct place for temple worship. The Jewish historian Josephus named “Sanballat” as the builder of this temple (Antiquities xi. 7, § 2.), but this person lived later than the one named Sanballat in Nehemiah. He likely confused the Sanballat in Nehemiah with one of his successors, possibly Sanballat II or Sanballat III. Josephus records the tradition of the Samaritans that the marriage of Manasseh and Sanballat's daughter from Nehemiah 13:28 led to the founding of the temple on Mount Gerizim.

3. The Jews resented the Samaritans sharing in the hopes and dreams of a Messianic future. The Jews believed in a Jewish Messiah who would establish a Jewish kingdom with the political and religious capital of Jerusalem. The Samaritan woman told Jesus “I know that Messiah is coming... When he comes, he will tell us all things...” (John 4:25). Many of the Samaritans responded positively when they heard the good news that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Samaritans and Gentiles also.

HANDOUT NT 201-12

The Jerusalem Council Decides the Future of Christianity” Acts 15:1-35

Acts chapter 15 records an event in early church history that may well be of equal if not greater significance than Pentecost. The success of Paul’s first missionary journey had brought Christianity to a major crossroads. Jerusalem, the cradle of Christianity, was almost exclusively composed of Jews or Jewish converts who had become believers in Jesus of Nazareth. The church in Antioch was more diverse than the church in Jerusalem and was therefore more accepting of the Gentile believers that were responding to the gospel in larger numbers than the Jews.

Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah had no problem accepting the Law of Moses; they had been devout, practicing Jews from the beginning and held onto their traditions while embracing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. They believed that salvation was *through* Judaism because God had entrusted the “good news” of salvation to the Jewish nation first. Therefore, Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes before they could be saved. Jewish believers taught that before Gentiles could be fully accepted in the faith, men must be circumcised, and both men and women must follow all the laws of Judaism.

Gentile believers, on the other hand, were receiving the Good News of the kingdom by faith. They sought to obey Christ by baptism as a sign of their new faith, rather than circumcision. It was clear to Paul and the other missionaries to the Gentiles that God was accepting these new believers because they were:

1. Responding to the preaching (kerygma) of the Apostles
2. Being baptized according to the command of the Lord
3. Being sealed by baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Paul and the other missionaries working amongst the Gentiles were convinced that God, by His Holy Spirit, had breached the walls of Judaism, and was commanding His apostles to take this message of salvation by the Son of David (Luke 20:41) directly to the Gentiles.

These two conflicting views – that salvation was exclusively *through* the Jews, versus the view that salvation was *from* the Jews first and then to the Gentiles – reached a crisis point when “certain men” arrived in Antioch and insisted, “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be

saved" (Acts 15:1). So a delegation from Antioch, led by Paul and Barnabas, went to Jerusalem to meet with the leaders there to settle this issue.

At stake at this Council of Jerusalem was whether the Jewish believers would submit to what God was doing and allow Gentiles into fellowship by faith apart from the rules and regulations of Mosaic Law, or would they resist the Holy Spirit and attempt to reseal the breach that had been opened between Jews and Gentiles by faith in Christ and require them to be circumcised first.

If "those of the circumcision" (Acts 11:2, 3) succeeded, it would create a major division in the church, and cause many Gentiles to turn away from faith in Christ because they would not see the need to exchange their heathen rituals and practices for a system of Jewish rituals – neither of which had the power to save.

After a great debate, James, speaking for the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, acknowledged what the Holy Spirit was doing among the Gentiles and declared that "no other burden than these necessary things" should be placed upon them to be fully embraced into the family of faith – the church (Acts 15:13-21).

WHY "THESE NECESSARY THINGS"? The Jewish believers at the Council of Jerusalem agreed that salvation was by faith through grace, which meant the Gentile believers did not have to follow Jewish laws. However, there were a few things that were particularly offensive to their Jewish brethren that they asked the Gentiles to abstain from (Acts 15:29). Beyond these, the Jews had no demands of Gentiles to be fully accepted into the faith.

Once the issues of Gentiles and the Law were settled, Paul, and all other future missionaries are able to set out on their journeys and openly preach the Gospel of salvation by faith and grace to all Jews and Gentiles as the way and means to salvation.

HANDOUT NT 201-12

The Message, "Christ the Lord" is Proclaimed to the Ends of the Earth

The *kerygma* is the heart of the Christian message; it is our declaration that through His life, death, and resurrection, "Jesus is Lord and Christ". It is the content of the gospel of salvation that Peter, John, Paul, and all the other missionaries in Acts so courageously proclaimed throughout the world.

Kerygma is preaching without compromise the message of the King: Acts chronicles how the Holy Spirit empowered these early missionaries to proclaim the kingdom in word and deed as they set about fulfilling the Great Commission from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.

The *Kerygma* means that Christ is more than our:

- Example
- Teacher
- Friend
- Savior

It means "Christ is Lord."

This fundamental proclamation of the Christian faith is called in Greek, the *kerygma* – the message that through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus truly is Lord and Savior. In 1 Corinthians, Paul confirms that this message, which from the viewpoint of the world is foolishness, is in fact "the power and wisdom of God" that the world is seeking (1:18-25). For Paul and all of those early missionaries, the *kerygma* – proclaiming or preaching the death and resurrection of Christ – was the only way that God brings about the salvation of all those who believe in Him and restore them into a right relationship with Him:

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?'

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Romans 10:14-17

Proof