

## SECOND YEAR MINISTRY

or not, as far as having any law goes. The gospel does not so demand. Yet, motivated by love, rather than law, how can a Christian, when he comes to maturity in thinking, want to do aught but the most he can? Christianity is wrapped up in love, Col. 3:14, and needs only a suggestion from God to supply direction. Yea, God's every wish is our command.

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### *Jerusalem—John 5:1-47*

Historically speaking, the feast of John 5 presents several things of importance and most important are the claims of Jesus of Nazareth about His life's history. The problem of what feast this is comprises one other item. What the law of the Sabbath was is another (for which discussion see the next section).

Division about whether this feast is a Passover, or some other feast, is always present. Some feel that it is not, and others argue as forcefully it was. Needless to say, it is not possible to decisively say from this point in time. For those who wish detailed arguments about it, consider Hendrickson, Vol. I, pages 187-189; Wescott, pages 92-94; Turner and Mantey, pages 129, 173-174; Bernard, pages XVII-XX; and Andrews, 189-198. Both external evidence from texts, versions, church fathers and all else that can be cited leaves the issue in doubt. Internal evidence causes some to argue vigorously for a Passover (generally on the basis of too short a time period for the recorded events in Galilee), and others (like Bernard in the old International Critical Commentary) to despair and resort to transposition of Chapters 5 and 6.

Since it devolves upon individual opinion, we choose a Passover. This choice gives another year to the length of Jesus' ministry, and makes it somewhat over 3 years.

## NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY: THE CHRIST

The order of Passovers and dates is then John 2:13, A.D. 27; John 4, A.D. 28; John 6:4, A.D. 29; and John 12:1—ch. 20, A.D. 30.

Assuming the sequence of events in John as given, it is rather doubtful that John's account would allow this to be the feast of Pentecost following the Passover of John 2:13. Consider the fact that 4:35 seemingly points to a harvest time. One would hardly call 50 days (from Passover Jn. 2, to Pentecost Jn. 4) 4 months. If the mention of time in 4:35 refers to the beginning of harvest of which normally first-fruits are offered at Passover, then at least 8 months have elapsed since John 2:13. Eight months would take us to a point of time beyond even the Feast of Tabernacles, which comes six months after Passover. If the feast of John 6:4 is the next succeeding Passover from John 2:13, then the only feasts left are those of Dedication in December and Purim in March. Purim was observed in the local synagogue, with Esther being read, and did not necessitate attendance in Jerusalem. The feast of Dedication in late December did not require attendance in Jerusalem or elsewhere. If Jesus were in Galilee in late November (end of John 4), it at least seems doubtful if He would go back to Jerusalem for this feast, necessity not requiring it. The law required attendance at Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacle of all male Jews as per Exodus 23:14-17 and Deut. 16:16-17. Thus as stated we choose the next succeeding Passover (in A.D. 28) from John 2:13 (A.D. 27) as the one in question. If it were the Pentecost feast following (in the year A.D. 28) it would make no essential difference in the total picture.

The other problem in this text is that of the pools in Jerusalem. The better reading in the text is that of Bethzatha, though there is some support for either Bethsaida or Bethesda. Its location is likewise in doubt, with most of the evidence pointing to a pool in the NE part.

The first name, Bethzatha, was applied in a modified form to the portion of the city north of the temple area, and between Stephen's Gate and Herod's Gate. The suggested pool is located near an ancient church building called St. Anne. It has five porches (or arcades) and an ancient fresco with one of the walls showing an angel troubling the pool water. The people (v. 7) thought that the pool water moved or something of the sort, and attributed healing properties to it. The reader will note that God does not say that such occurred (either the water acting curiously or any healings) but simply records the belief. Some have thought that a pool such as the Gihon pool, which has an intermittent action, must be the pool. But aside from the facts already stated, it is rather difficult from our point of time to decide what pool it was, or if the pool is even known, and if known (as the suggested pool) that it had an intermittent flow, whether it seems possible now or not.

Most readers will be aware of the fact that verses 3b-4 are not a part of John's original text. These were doubtless inserted by later copyists to provide a basis for the belief of the people as stated in verse 7. For some who read this, and are unaware of textual problems such as this one, we will remark that we are only interested in what God inspired men (such as the apostle John) to write. We want to know what was written by these men because such writings are alone inspired. Anything added (or taken away) is not inspired, and not God's Word. This position is a must for the Bible believer, for if we believe and accept what uninspired men wrote as being inspired, to that extent we will misteach or disobey God (since to believe is to teach and/or do what is believed).

"Do you wish to be healed?" To such an apparently naive question (why else would a cripple of 38 years be there?) the man answers firmly, if not directly, "yes."

Jesus gives the command and the man goes home whole. Questioned about such apparent law-breaking as pallet-carrying on the Sabbath, he justifies himself by citing Jesus' command. The stage is set for a sermon on His own deity by Jesus. He makes the affirmation in v. 17 about His action and His relationship to God. When the Jews draw the conclusion He is claiming equality with God in v. 18, He stamps His approval on their good logic and preaches a sermon to enforce it.

This Sabbath healing is one of at least seven recorded. They are as follows: 1) A man with a demon, Mk. 1; Lk. 4, 2) Peter's mother-in-law, Matt. 8; Mk. 1; Lk. 4, 3) the paralytic of our text, 4) the man with the right hand withered, Matt. 12; Mk. 3; Lk. 6, 5) the blind man in John 9, 6) a woman bowed double, Lk. 13, and 7) a man with dropsy, Lk. 14.

The sermon teaches that Jesus is unique with God as the giver of physical and spiritual life, the judge and jury of all mankind, and the subject of various witnesses, specifically 1) John the Immerser, vv. 33-35, 2) His works, v. 36, 3) the Father Himself, v. 37, 4) the Scriptures themselves, vv. 38-40, 5) and Moses, vv. 45-57. We believe the word translated "search" in vs. 39 is best understood as a statement of Jesus about what the men were doing, rather than a command to study the Scriptures. He warns the men that they had a poor relationship with God when they refused God's glory displayed in Christ and accepted man's glory, and that their own "fairhaired" boy, even Moses, would accuse them (the Greek word means bring charges against as a district attorney would) of rejecting Him.

*Galilee* (1) & (2) & (3)—*Matt.* 12:1-21;

*Mk.* 2:23—3:12; *Lk.* 6:1-11

The Sabbath was a problem in N.T. times, and is yet.

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We have those in our time who would make the day something other than what God intended, and the same was true in the ministry of Jesus. The Lord never said so, but it almost seems at times that He intentionally did things on Saturday just to gain attention, to the end that teaching could be done. He tried often to show how God meant for the people to observe the Sabbath in contrast to the ways they did observe it.

Jesus gave five reasons why the Pharisees were wrong in their interpretation (He also corrected false ideas in John 4:22ff.—a good challenge for us to check *our* ideas) about the Sabbath. He declared the disciples broke no law of God, and were “not guilty” in what they were doing by citing a case 1) in history: David, not guilty because of necessity, 2) of exemption: the priests, who actually *worked* harder Saturday than any other day, 3) from prophecy: the correct attitude will do or undo any action, 4) the real intent of the laws about it: it was not meant to be a burden, but a blessing for man’s use, 5) and the real relationship of Jesus to the day. He knew how He meant for the day to be kept, even when He gave it to Moses.

We definitely feel that Jesus had every right to show what constituted keeping the Sabbath laws. After all, if He were equal with God, He was directly responsible for all the O.T., and the Sabbath laws are included. There was really no bad thing in the law, but the interpretation by the Jews was certainly bad. They had falsely taught what constituted “work” on the Sabbath, or, in another sense, how God meant for the day to be kept holy. Granted that God meant for no work to be done on that day, but who defined “work”? Jesus showed that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, as in Matt. 12:9-14. So “doing” things did not necessarily constitute breaking the rule against work.

Perhaps this incident can help us see one of the problems with laws: they must be clarified as to what is meant, etc. One law almost demands three others to explain it. Jesus finally came to give us an example of the perfect law-keeper. We are firmly persuaded that He Who came to fulfill all righteousness, Who did no sin, Who was made under the law, Who was tempted in all ways as we yet without sinning, did not break any one of God's laws. To do so would constitute sin. Nor are we persuaded that He put Himself above them, just so He would not have to observe them. What sort of example would that have been for His disciples? or for us? The incident in Matthew 17:24-27 is cited by some to show that Jesus considered Himself free from keeping the law. But the text does not say He intended to avoid paying the tax—just that the men asked Peter whether He paid it or not. You will note that Peter and the questioners were all aware of the law, and as aware of Jesus' relationship to payment of the tax. You may also note that Jesus paid it (though He used it to show Who He really was) to not be a cause of stumbling. Please reread Luke 17:1-2 in this light. Some teach that Jesus did not go up to the Passover at the end of the second year of ministry. But the text does not state that fact. Our conclusion from the above remarks is that He did go, and invariably observed all laws, while exhorting others to do likewise (note the command to the leper in Matthew 8). One teaches by practice quite as much as by speech.

How much are you worth? God taught His disciples that a poor exchange would take place if a man gave his soul for the whole world, Matt. 16:24-26. But men have always degraded themselves, and others like themselves, Romans 1:18-32. (The exclamation of Jesus that a man is worth more than any sheep is intended for those listening—men who had no idea of the worth of a soul.) The

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people in our own time who teach that man is simply the result of impersonal matter plus time plus chance are no different. History is replete with men (and women) who so thought, and translated such thinking into mass murder. If such an idea is really true, then why does it matter if bombs are dropped on large cities? or if abortion is allowed? or we "shoot up" with heroin? Does it matter at all if we are only matter? However, if Jesus is right, and man is worth more than a sheep, then everything that is important is wrapped up on each man's individual personality—the unseen world is the real, abiding world, II Cor. 4:16-18. Each man and woman is then worth exactly as much, no more or less, than Jesus, Who died for each. How much, think ye, is that?

Aware of the action being planned by the Pharisees and Herodians, all hard of heart, Jesus left the synagogue, and went into the surrounding area. The gospels record eleven times when Jesus withdrew for some reason, as rest, prayer, or safety. But hardness of heart was not a malady of all, so many people came from everywhere, and Jesus helped them. Seven centuries earlier, God had prophesied through Isaiah that Jesus would come and serve. The promise was kept, and so very wonderfully.

So intense were the seekers that the disciples feared for His life, and kept a boat ready for His safety. And no wonder, for He healed all who came.

As you read the text in Matthew, verses 18-21, meditate upon the description of His ministry. So tender, careful, compassionate with all who came with honest and good hearts. The concern in dealing with each life, some so broken, almost gone, even as the bruised reed and smoldering lamp about out of oil, was so often expressed in His ministry. When Jesus comes, the tempter's power is broken, tears are banished, darkness departs, life begins—for all. Jews, Gentiles, whoever, can hope in the name

that is above every name, and find life in the only name under heaven whereby salvation can be obtained, Acts 4:11-12.

Galilee was not large, as we think of size, being only about thirty miles east to west, and fifty miles north to south. The tour of Jesus in these recent months, plus all the miracles, had generated wide interest. The ministry was growing, and help was now needed. Among those many interested followers Jesus had twelve men who were now ready to be enrolled full time in His peripatetic school.

*Galilee (4)—Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16*

Prayer through the night was followed by the choice of these twelve, seven of whom we have already known for over a year as being disciples. Now they are to be aided by five others. We include a list to show these. Luke gives two men different names in his accounts in Luke 6 and Acts 1 which we note. Otherwise, all four lists, Matt. 10, Mk. 3, Lk. 6, Acts 1, are essentially the same. Other names are found in various texts, and we give these.

*Matthew 10, and Mark 3*

Simon Peter	Thomas
Andrew, his brother	Matthew
James, son of Zebedee	James, son of Alphaeus
John, his brother	Thaddaeus
Philip	Simon the Cananaean
Bartholomew	Judas Iscariot

Bartholomew is a patronymic, and is thus like the King James rendering Bar-jona (Matt. 16). The prefix "bar" means "son of" which makes Simon (Peter) the son of John. The word Bartholomew means "son of Tolmai." He likely had another name, and is often identified with Nathanael of John 1. The full name would then be Nathanael Bar Tolmai. Thomas is also identified as the "twin"



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(King James—"Didymus") in John 20:24. Matthew is identified by himself as one of the hated tax collectors (called publicans in the King James); and also as Levi the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27). James is also called "the Less" in Mark 15:40. The other James is identified as "son of Alphaeus." The name "Alphaeus" was a very common name, and in its Hebrew form would be spelled Alphi or Clephi, but as Chalphai in Arimaeon. So, sometimes it is seen in our New Testament in the form Cleophas, or Clopas. We note a Mary, the wife of Clopas in John 19:25 at the cross with other women. (See the chart of these under the discussion of the crucifixion.) It is doubtful if the Cleopas in Luke 24:18 is the same name (and person) as Cleophas (Clopas). It is hard to decide if Mary is the mother of any of the apostles. Thaddaeus is likely the Judas, son of James, Lk. 6. The appellation "the Zealot" is given by Luke in Chapter 6 and Acts 1 for Simon the Cananaean.

### *Galilee (5)—Matt. 5:1—7:29; Lk. 6:17-49*

Having chosen the twelve men who would share with Him the establishment of a new order, Eph. 2:20, Jesus details principles of the disciple's life. The principles are not meant for the world to keep, but the disciple. It is not surprising then that countless men have looked at it and despaired, or declared it "unchristian" and unworkable. Jesus enunciates ideals that are attainable—only in Him. The sermon is not gospel but law. It shows us how things were meant to be, and must be. The state of the one in Christ, the life expected of one in Christ, the relationship of Jesus to the O. T. law (as an expression of God's eternal principles) and the relationship thus expressed of the disciple to Jesus: all are clearly taught in this discourse.

Consider the verses containing the beatitudes. They are certainly other-worldly. The world would not consider happiness from the positions enumerated in these verses. But it all depends on one's point of view—if God is in the picture as in Rom. 8:28, then the abiding state of the disciple is happiness regardless. Read James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-16; Acts 5:41-42; 16:19-34; Matt. 10:24-32 in this light. Please do not miss the tense of the verb: it is present, thus what the disciple now possesses in Christ (See John 3:36a; Rom. 5:1 and 8:37). You should then consider the verses to teach that happiness is a given state, and that state is in Christ. We assume the parallel passage in Luke is but the negative of these verses.

As these verses present what the disciple has through Christ, so vv. 13-16 present what the disciple is to the world. *Salt*: the negative function of preserving from decay, a life secretly, quietly but surely changing the status quo. *Light*: the positive expression of illumination and consequent elimination of darkness. Light's function is shining. So we must. All the darkness in the world can not really put out the smallest candle.

Jesus now explains and clarifies His relationship to the O. T. law. He gave it, and now He both 1) replaces it and 2) explains it. The disciples are treated to the real meaning of certain commandments expressed in the O. T. law, and enjoined to pay strict attention to what Jesus says, else a total collapse of life will result. There are no alternatives—only absolutes (as in 5:19-20), either in the elaboration of the commands or our response to such.

Attitudes about others is the subject of 5:21-26. Nullifying attitudes such as hatred must go. Instead, *we* make every effort to have right(eous) relationships with others, Rom. 14:18. We may undo all we attempt to do in worship to God otherwise, as in 6:14-15.

We will consider marriage and divorce in detail under

point # 64 (4), but consider this: Jesus clearly teaches the real intent of the seventh commandment, and especially as it relates to the tenth commandment. Adultery is uncontrolled desire, which translates into lack of self-control. The disciple who is a man is to add self-control to his faith, II Pet. 1:3-11. Thus he has *no excuse* for such sin. He may blame "Eve" or "Bathsheba" for "their" ungodliness but it is his lack of self-control that is at fault. Men need to hear Nathan say again, "You are the man!" Note that the *excision* is to be done on the one lusting, not the one about whom a man lusts. Who can have a *pure heart* if not the one who wills it? The woman's body was created by God, and is considered *very good*, Gen. 1:31. All vice is but perverted virtue. The body has proper use—but the lustful man can misuse his body (such as his eyes, mind) as well as the woman hers. Do you have any excuse for your sin? Consider II Cor. 10:5 and Titus 1:15 in this regard. Your own will is the key.

5:33-37 speaks of an honesty basic to any Christian. The only reason oaths are necessary is because of evil, as expressed by dishonesty. Are you as good as your word? Expressed contracts are often needful, that all parties concerned may know what is expected of each, but the oath to bind each party to the agreement should not be necessary, at least for the Christian. Laws may require oaths, and this passage does not forbid them if such is true—Jesus only states the "law" for the Christian, what he should do and be in regard to others. He must realize that all he does and says is ultimately related to God.

5:38-42 expresses the idea of retaliation (whether it be physical or judicial) in the Christian life. A parallel passage is Rom. 12:19-21; and Peter reminds us of Jesus in I Pet. 2:21-23. The verse from Ex. 21:24 is in a section (21:18—22:17) that deals with retaliation and restitution in various phases of life. Lev. 21:18-21 and Deut. 19:1-

21 are related texts. The disciple is not to be vindictive. The particular verse in question expressed the *limit* that could be demanded by one wronged. But the one wronged did not need to demand the limit. He could forgive and forget. What do you consider the normal course of action should be for the disciple? Should he be vindictive?

Jesus speaks of the "mile." Any Roman soldier who was in need of help could force anyone around to aid him if circumstances demanded it. But Jesus says that the disciple was not only to go the first mile gladly, but the second mile willingly! How utterly astounding to Jewish ears, for the Romans were despised. But that is the "undertone" of this whole sermon: how God really expects people to live. Question: have you ever considered the "second mile" as your privilege? Do you make the most of any opportunity that comes your way?

5:43-48 concerns being unworldly. We must be "other-worldly" or like God is. God treats all alike in some respects, and we are to be like Him. God treats all alike (even being kind to the ungrateful and selfish, Lk. 6:35), though not from ignorance or indifference. It is just that love always wants to go the second mile. The contrast in our text is between disciples and others (defined as non-disciples). What do ye more than others? Others are going to hell, you know. We are to be different, not in degree but in kind.

Note that the O.T. did not teach that one was to hate enemies. That was an addition by humans. What additions to God's laws do you make to keep from doing those laws? Read again Matt. 15:3-9.

You should be aware of the fact that 6:1-18 is taking up the topic of a godly life which can be expressed in many ways, three of which are mentioned: charity (in our sense of the word), prayer, and fasting. Those of you who use the King James Version must consider that the

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word *alms* in verse 1 is a mistranslation. The Greek word is translated as 'righteousness' in such passages as ch. 5:20 and Rom. 1:17. It should be here. Sometimes the word piety is used to express a life of right living. Keep in mind that this sermon is for the disciple of Jesus. As disciples, we do not need or desire the praise of men, but of God. Motives for doing things is the crux of this passage. Why do you help the needy? pray? fast? If it is for aught but the kingdom, it is eternally useless. God will reward us in the next life (the word 'openly' in v. 4, 6, and 18 is not justified at all) if our motives are pure. Pure motives are to be expressed by us in all we do, whether in word or deed, because we are Christ's, Col. 3:17.

God gives many undeserving people sun, rain, life, crops, health, etc. He also helps those who do deserve such things. The disciple can do likewise by means of charitable acts, whether through some agency or not. The important thing: love is the motive, not honor from men.

Prayer is a most wonderful thing—if done for the right reason. If done to receive the praise of men, it is damning. The only motive for prayer is to communicate with God. There may be secondary effects of such, even the praise of men, but such must never be the reason for prayer. You will note that the model for prayer that Jesus gives centers around God, and the disciple's relationship to Him. It is simple, though inclusive. Verbosity is so easily confused with piety, and fluency with devotion! These things are not necessarily equal.

Jesus teaches that in the first two words the disciple has settled things between himself and God, this material world, and others in it. *Our Father* is only for the disciple, who is attempting to 1) live a life honoring (hallowing) God through 2) doing His will here on earth and 3) at-

tempting to get the rest of the people in the world to do it.

The only three states in life anyone can have are past, present and future. The present state is now, with the past gone, the material needs of today are of concern. We need not ask for tomorrow's bread (needs) until tomorrow. Only today's is of importance (note the amplification of this idea in verses 19-34). God will take care, on any given day, of the needs thereof. We need but fully trust Him. So very often we do not even know what we need or do not need. We often ask wrongly, James 4:1-4. To not be unduly anxious over that which does not exist (tomorrow) is our daily thought, Phil. 4:4-7. Too often our present is robbed of its rightful joy because we either carry the past into it, or borrow from a future possibility that is actually non-existent. When you pray, then, do this: 1) pray as a child of God, 2) mean what you pray about your life and God's will. Assume that God hears and answers (the Bible teaches that both are true) your prayers. Now—if He has answered your prayer, even in a way you did not ask, believe that He has brought about the present circumstances in your life exactly as you need them. What is happening is God's will for you. If He knows best, then you should rejoice in what is happening, since it is but the answer to your prayers. Did you read Phil. 4:4 (not 6 or 7, but verse 4)? It is not an easy lesson to learn, admittedly, but it can be done. Paul had *to learn* to be content in any circumstance, Phil. 4:10-13.

Fasting is not demanded of the disciple. It can be practiced if desired. The O. T. only commanded one day of fasting, the day of Atonement. Jewish teachers had various traditions, as in Lk. 18:12, but none were given by God. To make matters worse, many did it to be seen by men for their praise. That motivation undoes all one

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can do. Therefore, when a disciple fasts he is to look normal! Fasting is for self only.

6:19-34 points up one basic fact: all the disciple does must be with one goal: pleasing God. Anything that divides such an "aim" is of evil. And such a person, double-minded, is unstable in all ways, James 1:5-8. Jesus, in Heb. 10:7, and Paul, in Phil. 3:12-14, set the right examples. Any other life is a relatively "faithless" life. Worldly care is an evidence of unbelief.

Perhaps 7:1 has been misapplied about as many times as any Bible verse. The verse has nothing to do with the judgment God will render upon everyone, as Acts 17:31 and Heb. 9:27 have in mind. Jesus is forbidding only one thing: a criticism of others that is ungodly. You should note that verse 5 specifically states that help for others is to be given, after the disciple has considered his own deficiency. Appraisal of people is a daily task: how else will we obey verse 6, or II Cor. 6:14ff., just to mention two of many verses? The verse could be translated as "Quit criticising unjustly, for you will be criticised the same way." Note that Romans 2:1 does not forbid judgment of others at all, but rather condemns a person for not applying the same principles of judgment on self.

Please note that Jesus expects us to help others worthy of it; withhold help from those who do not, v. 6. Both involve judgment. Judgment is expected in verses 13-14, and verses 15-20, and verses 21-23, and verses 24-27. What Jesus wants is honest judgment.

Now—how to accomplish it? The answer: ask, seek, knock. God will help us. In fact, much help from God is ours already. It's in the Bible. Will you read Eph. 4:11-16, esp. v. 13; and II Timothy 3:16-17 in this light? Note Heb. 5:11-14 here, too.

7:12 is the climax of 7:1-11. However, it is a basic moral principle as old as God Himself. Consider yourself,

and your needs. Sometimes, if you are honest, you need to be loved, helped, encouraged, etc. Other times you need to be denied, spanked, reprovéd, etc. How do you then apply this principle, based on your own determination of need, to the man who is wronged in 5:21-26? How about the woman in 5:27-31 (or girls, the man in the same text)? If you are able to have your way in life, what would you like for others to mean by their 'yes' or 'no'? What do you mean by yours? How about the text in 5:38-42: suppose you were a person who was greedy, and were always "living off" your friends or relatives. What should love really do: give or deny? Love does not do any evil, Rom. 13:8-10. Would evil possibly be the giving of something, or the withholding of something? Suppose you were a drug addict: what would be good (an act of love) rather than evil—to give you another dose, or refuse to do so? How do you think love acts? Does love ever do wrong? (Did you define 'wrong' from God's absolutes or the world's?) How does 7:12 apply to 7:1-11?

7:13-28 is the conclusion of the sermon. Jesus' authority and way of life are implicit in it. His way is the narrow way, all other ways are from teachers who are blind (Lk. 6:39-40). Consider carefully where a man's doctrine will take you. The fruit a teacher produces is good or bad depending on the ultimate result. Jesus as a teacher will lead you to life. One may teach others Jesus' teaching and they can have life. But false doctrines abound, and the end results of such must be judged. Following the wrong teacher will produce the result in 7:21-23. Lives based on false teaching will collapse totally, vv. 26-27.

Two ways, two foundations, two rewards, neither less nor more. The whole sermon is based on these precepts. Indeed, Jesus' whole life and teaching carry these ideas.



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Your life could end on a "minor" note if you take the wrong way, build on the wrong foundation, and gain the wrong reward. Do you really want your house (life) to come crashing down around your ears?

### *Galilee (6)—Matt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10*

Humanness was a part of Jesus' makeup, though just how we do not know. It is seen when tiredness comes, grief and anger are present, companionship is desired, or when He marvels as is the response to the faith of the centurion. How tragic that Israel (His own people) could not present to Him a faith that matched it.

The centurion's faith is seen in his expression concerning authority. Faith is trust. Trust obeys authority, whether reason for the command is completely understood or not. The Gentile sinner simply shamed the Jewish people, over whom he ruled, by his complete trust in the authority of Jesus to do whatever Jesus wanted (expressed by his belief in Jesus' ability to heal his servant without bothering to go where the servant was). And, as he expected, the servant was healed. Our prayer probably needs to be, as was the disciples', "Lord help us increase our faith," Lk. 17:5. Our centurion, like the one at the cross, Cornelius in Acts 10 and Julius in Acts 27, is a challenge to mimic.

### *Nain—Luke 7:11-17*

Nain is only mentioned in Luke 7:11. It is doubtful if much would be remembered about it by anyone. However, for one widow, name unknown, Jesus made the town live forever in happy memory. Located probably where the modern town of Nein is, Nain was surrounded by Old Testament towns of note. Endor, I Samuel 27, was about two miles west, Shunem about five miles south-

west, II Kings 4, and Jezreel was about seven miles in a southerly direction. Jezreel was the scene of Naboth's tragedy, I Kings 21, the last encampment of King Saul before his death, I Samuel 29, the location where Joram was slain by Jehu, and where wicked Jezebel became dog food, II Kings 9.

Women were supposedly objects of care and concern, even in Old Testament times, at least for the Jews. But practice rarely matched God's expectation. Often the widow who could not find another husband was reduced to beggary or worse. It is heartwarming then to read that Jesus returned a means of livelihood to such a woman. How she must have marveled that Jesus came her way. Though funerals often lasted over one day in respect to mourning (see John 11), yet burial was quite often the day of death. So it was rather unusual that such a meeting took place.

Though touching a dead person meant ceremonial defilement, Numbers 19:11-22, for seven days, we note that when Jesus came, life came. We wonder if Jesus became unclean in touching the beir, or if in touching it, the dead was not dead?

*Capernaum—Matt. 11:2-19; Lk. 7:18-35, 36-50*

Did you ever try to put a square peg in a round hole so that the two fit? John had some of the same problems we do, and recognized them. He had painted a picture of the 'coming one' but Jesus did not seem to fit it. So he began to doubt—whether himself, or Jesus we know not. Viewing the picture he painted in Matt. 3:11-12, we will also find it hard to match Jesus to it. Many others tried to push Jesus one way or another (as Jesus teaches in our text, v. 12) to make Him fit. Prophets in all times sought to harmonize what they said to what they

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knew (see I Peter 1:10-11; and consider Acts 2:39 to Acts 10:1ff.). But so very often prejudice ruled, and Jesus described this under the figure of children who will not to be pleased. People found reasons for refusing John (and thus disobeyed God) and likewise for Jesus (and thus crucified the Lord of glory). A question for you, dear reader: what are your reasons for disobeying God's will?

Perhaps John's continued imprisonment at Machaerus (per Josephus), located on the east side of the Dead Sea, and the realization that Jesus was making no attempt to free him (not to mention the fact that Jesus' ministry did not conform to John's description) resulted in this question. It may be that John thought Jesus had forgotten him (he had been there some time—perhaps 3-4 months, see Mt. 4:13) and just took this method of reminding Jesus of it. These questions would be better with answers, but we have none for them. One thing is for certain: If John could have heard what Jesus said about him, his heart would have glowed.

We do not know his reaction to the statements of Jesus, but we can speculate. John died upholding God's truth, which he had always taught. He was not the type of character that could be bent with any passing breeze of doctrine, or who stood in fear of kings as do the people in a king's court. Is it too much to say that meditation on the work of Jesus reassured this last and perhaps greatest of all (other than his Master) the prophets?

### *Capernaum (2)—Matt. 11:20-30*

In contrast to John's life of trust, the people in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were mostly distrustful, and ultimately disowned by God. How wicked they must have been to have Jesus say that even the people of

Sodom would have less accountability (that is, we would more readily excuse them than the people in Jesus' day if we could see both as God does) than they. Opportunity means responsibility—and these cities had much of each because the majority of Jesus' mighty works was done in their streets and houses.

Wisdom is not always godly. Some reject God's wisdom, and the result is arrogance, and a second rejection—by God. We daily must bring every thought into subjection to Jesus and then we will be wise in reality. The wise and understanding are only such when they subject all to God. God only laughs at men who exalt their wisdom and attainments, Psalms 2:1-4. To be laughed at by God is not funny—we had better learn that fear of God is the beginning point of wisdom.

Revealed religion is the message of Matt. 11:27. Grasp also the unique relationship of Jesus (see John 1:18, 14:9) to God the Father. Now if the claim of v. 27 is true, then the words of verses 28-30 naturally follow. This section claims quite as much for Jesus as the oft-cited passage in Matt. 28:18. Jesus had the right to offer what He did and satisfy the taker.

Isaiah 57:20-21 depicts the state of people in sin. Just as accurately drawn is the conclusion of Peter in Acts 15:10 concerning the Jews particularly. Sometimes men were responsible for some of the ceaseless turmoil of people under law, as noted by Jesus in Mt. 23:4.

The poignant cry was for relief! But a yoke is relief? To a knowledgeable person, a yoke smacked of toil, submission . . . anything but relief. And a yoke that did not fit meant shoulder sores, and heightened anguish. The gospel story is made the more vivid by paradoxes. Here is one of those.

Jesus gives rest to all who come. We are free in Christ, Gal. 5:1, to do as we please. Jesus makes the yoke

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easy (the Greek word implies agreeable, pleasant, well-fitting), just right for us. Yea, Jesus took (our) burden, and left us with a song. All this . . . and heaven, too.

### *Capernaum* (3)—*Luke* 7:36-50

“Simon: I have something to say to you” (and the rest of us better listen in!). Simon thought that Jesus was not really what He claimed, since He allowed “this . . . sinner” to touch Him. One’s smug complacency and self-sufficiency often shut the door to blessings, though. Jesus had to teach that His mission was to sinners and not to righteous (cf. Matt. 9:12-14), as well as the fact that the attitude of the debtor to the one owed makes the essential difference. Faith is the required attitude, love is the motivated response to forgiveness. Faith makes whole, and love tells the story. Simon’s attitude was like that of those in Lk. 11:52. The woman (not either Mary Magdalene or the Mary in John 12:1ff.) displayed in life what Simon perhaps never dreamed of, or if so, never allowed himself to dream again. It is no wonder that the common people flocked to Jesus, and compassion was forthcoming. Anyone not of the Pharisees seemingly was considered less than equal, and often much less. Note the comments of the Pharisees about Matthew’s guests, Matt. 9:11, and the remark of the Pharisees and scribes in Luke 15:1-2. (See Peter’s evaluation of himself in Luke 5:8.) You also note what they thought about Jesus in John 9:16, and the blind man in 9:34 (note the blind man’s expression in v. 31). These references show that the thought of Simon about the woman, v. 39, does not mean necessarily that she was a harlot, as some suggest. She may simply have been of low estate or one despised by Pharisees. A Jewish saying of the time had the true rabbi thanking God daily that he was not 1) a Gentile,

2) a commoner, or 3) a woman. It is worth remembering that Christianity does more to make men realize common equality of all (Acts 17:26 and Romans 3:29-30), and elevate the position of womanhood than any other system known to man.

*Second Galilean Tour* (1), (2), (3)—*Matt.* 12:22-45, 46-50; *Mk.* 3:19b-30, 31-35; *Lk.* 8:19-21

Conduct reveals character! A good tree bears good fruit, but how can one speak good when one is evil? Jesus states the reason why He was accused of being allied with Satan in spite of the obvious fact that He was daily working against him. He well points out that Satan is not so stupid that he would undo his own work. Conclusion: Jesus and Satan were at loggerheads! A second plain fact was also evident by the forced eviction of Satan's agents: the one evicting was greater than the one evicted. Pity for the accusers of Jesus would be in order except for the fact that they had little or no excuse for such poor reasoning. Jesus will teach in *Matt.* 13 that people in Israel were willful sinners, especially in rejecting Him.

Words are then not to be uttered lightly. They express what we are inside. They are one area in which we will be held responsible. A tree's fruit reveals its makeup. Our expression does likewise. This is why Jesus speaks of sin—the men recognized a notable deed had been done, but refused to acknowledge the real agency causing it, *Mk.* 3:30. And no one can be neutral in this area.

Continual distortion of evident facts is a sign of an evil make-up. In respect to Jesus, the Holy Spirit's testimony about Him is disregarded, and labeled false. Such action is sin. Maintaining this state means sin is constant,

and not able to be forgiven. Repentance is a change of mind (the antecedent of repentance is faith. Faith presupposes knowledge of God's will and our relationship to that will by which we will find ourselves to be sinners.) resulting in a change of conduct. Only by repentance is forgiveness possible. Continual sinning clearly indicates a life in opposition to the will of God, since God does not desire that such a state be true. Repentance must become a part of such a life, or God cannot forgive (see II Chron. 7:14 in this light).

The preceding paragraph is an introduction to a discussion about the sin of which Jesus speaks, commonly referred to as the unpardonable sin. We must understand the word "pardon" as being exactly equal to the word "forgiveness" in this context. Thus, when we speak of sin which is unpardonable, we mean sin which is unforgiveable. We believe the Bible teaches 1) that a person not in Christ has no sin forgiven him. Many passages plainly teach that forgiveness is only in Jesus. 2) The corollary to this statement is that a person in Christ has every sin forgiven. We have peace, Rom. 5:1, no condemnation, Rom. 8:1, are made righteous, II Cor. 5:21, in Christ, because the sinner is brought nigh by and receives forgiveness (pardon) through His blood, Eph. 2:13; I John 1:7; which all results in each such person possessing eternal life (we have it, present possession) according to John 3:36. Conversely, the person not in Christ has no peace, Isaiah 57:20-21; Eph. 2:14, nor mercy, I Pet. 2:10, nor hope, Eph. 2:12, for we are without God, Eph. 2:12, and separated from Christ, Eph. 2:12. Therefore, God's wrath abides (now) on us, John 3:36.

This position leads to this conclusion: In Christ, any and all sins are forgiven, but out of Christ any and all sins are not forgiven. We believe that this position is the starting point, the universal, the major premise from which

all else is reckoned. A conclusion from this position: Any and all sins are/are not forgivable (pardonable) depending absolutely and directly upon one's relationship to Jesus. Hence, any sin is or could be unforgivable, depending on who you are, Christian or non-Christian. Any sin is or can be forgiven, if we are in Christ.

We then posit this fact: The Bible only treats two states in life: in Christ or not in Christ. If we either do not become Christian or cease being such, this state definitely keeps us from receiving any pardon. The all-important state in life is to be in Jesus for life is in the Son, I John 5:11-12. We get in Christ by a decision of our will, and that is the way we stay there. We get out by a decision of our will, and that is the way we stay there. Therefore, a continuing decision to do every day the will of God is habitual for the Christian. This person may sin during the day, but that is not the aim or intent habitually. If sin occurs, forgiveness is sought, repentance occurs, and pardon is then ours. We rather than willing to habitually sin will to habitually do right. Sin is abhorred, and Christ is loved instead. Sin will then be not habit-forming. For us to live will be for Christ to live. This is the Christian!

The Christian state in life is then a decided (willed) habit, a continual willing to be in Christ regardless of any evil that occurs in our life. If we sin, we recognize it, confess it, (which involves repentance of it) and keep on keeping on in Christ. To state it again, we make a decision for life when we choose Christ, and nothing that happens is going to change our minds about that decision. In this state, we remain justified to God. Not that we do not sin—I John 1:8-9 assumes that we do sin—but we act as a child of God should about it: repent, etc. Do you think that Paul never sinned after he became a Christian? Did he cease being Christian when he did so? If



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not, why not? Did Peter never sin after he became a part of Christ? Did he cease being Christian when he did so? If not, why not? If you have answered the first questions with "no" and the second questions likewise, how do you think they remained in Christ? Did they repent, and confess such sin, do you think? If so, could you not do the same, and the identical results accrue to you as to them?

Any other position than the one just stated puts a person under a law system, and not under grace. If each time we sin, we cease being Christian until that sin is forgiven, and we remain in Christ only until we again sin, we do not live under a system of grace, but law. If such were true, how could Paul ever call the people in the church at Corinth "saints" when they were such sinners? Was Peter out of Christ when Paul had to correct him in Antioch (see Gal. 2)?

The secret then of the Christian life is aptly stated by Paul in Philippians 3:13-14. It is called the life of faith, which includes Abraham with his sin, Jacob with his, Paul and Peter with theirs. We are justified through faith, and we possess peace (which is essentially a word describing a right relationship with God, not necessarily the absence of conflict or trouble in one's life) through Christ who is the means of our justification and reconciliation, Rom. 5:1; 4:25; 5:11.

Now for the statement of Jesus in our text. From the foregoing discussion we believe that Jesus is spelling out the state of the men in our text who were asserting that He was of the devil. They were rejecting the testimony of the miracle as to the personage of Jesus. Such testimony rejected means that these men had refused the only hope they had. They were definitely not doing God's will. In fact, Jesus and John were both rejected by some, and in so doing, they refused God's will for them, Luke

7:29-30. We believe this because the Bible teaches that Jesus was and is the only way to have forgiveness of sins.

The relationship of the Holy Spirit to Jesus has an important bearing here. We believe the Bible teaches that Jesus' earthly life was under the direction of the Holy Spirit, as Luke 4:1, 14 would indicate. The Holy Spirit was also the means through which the apostles and others wrote the New Testament, John 16:7-14, etc. Now, if we reject the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ, we essentially reject Christ. We hence cast aside the only means of forgiveness man has. Such refusal puts us into the state where no sins are pardoned. As long as we continue in that state, we have no forgiveness. Hebrews 10:26 teaches that fact, as do other passages. The men opposing Jesus were either in such state or of such a bent of will that they were going to be there. This is why Jesus charges them in vv. 33-37 to rightly judge, and not be prejudiced against Him. He points out in vv. 38-42 that their rejection of Him was worse than they thought.

Others with less testimony accepted the means to forgiveness, or simply realized God's presence in a life (the men of Nineveh, the queen of Sheba) and a greater than either Jonah or Solomon stood in their presence. The peril of continuing in the state of mind these men possessed is then pointed out in vv. 43-45. The devil will have the life at last that rejects the One Who is life.

This is the state in life of the one described in Hebrews 6:4-6. The continued set of mind against Jesus means the person in question cannot be brought to a state of repentance. For those of you who do not read Greek, infinitives and participles in the present tense describe a habitual state. The Greek participles (conveying the ideas of crucifying Christ and contemptuously holding Him up to public display) in verse 6 are both in the present tense, depicting the fact that the person in view wills for the

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state to continue. These form the key to understanding the "impossible" idea presented in verse 4. If one leaves Christ, the state in which pardon is available, and refuses to return, (such refusal results in futility for any renewal efforts), quite obviously repentance is not willed. Continuance of this willed state will provide the devil with an empty house to occupy. We can not remain neutral in life, Matt. 12:30. Consider then the peril of the empty life, not filled with Christ! My (only) hope is in Christ. Where is yours?

Summarizing the discussion we posit:

- 1) —Any and all sin can be forgiven (pardoned) if a person is in Christ. Otherwise, no sin of any kind is forgiven (pardoned). The key then is being in Christ.
- 2) —Repentance expressed in confession, a request for forgiveness and a change of conduct is prerequisite to forgiveness.
- 3) —The person in Christ is always justified since he has fulfilled the condition in # 2. He will habitually be in this frame of mind.
- 4) —Habitual abode in Christ is sufficient to present one spotless before the throne of God regardless of any particular sin committed.
- 5) —Habitual sinning, indicating a change of mind in reference to Christ, will put one into a state where forgiveness is not possible (since only in Christ is forgiveness available).

Comment has already been made about the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Sufficient is the remark that Jesus pinpoints the necessity of willing to become related to and joint-heirs with Him.

*Second Galilean Tour* (4) & (5)—*Matt.* 13:1-52;  
8:18-22; *Mk.* 4:1-34; *Lk.* 8:4-18; 9:57-62

Utilizing the natural amphitheatre formed by the lake-shore, Jesus presents the coming kingdom by means of parables, each of which illuminates a given aspect of the kingdom. Used frequently by other Jewish teachers, and in Jewish writings, Jesus capitalizes upon this method to draw interest in the kingdom. Most people enjoy teaching that is plain, neither too simple nor too hard. Style often discourages listening, and any good teacher endeavors to keep interest at a high level. A parable disarms rather than immediately alienating. A story is a seed bed for new truth. The enduring worth of these is well illustrated in a man's experience in World War II. Harold Dixon and two other men crashed into the Pacific Ocean. A thousand miles from land, left with nothing but a raft eight feet by four feet, they began to drift, and thirty-four days they drifted until land appeared. During those days, Dixon remembered some of these stories he had been taught during childhood in Bible School. He recounts that every evening he would tell one story. It served to snap them out of their depressed mood, and stimulate lively discussion. By such as this, they retained their sanity. A story is indeed a seed bed for new and exciting ideas. Parabolic teaching will, if the lesson is caught, be easily remembered. Jesus implies that their worth, as instruments of teaching, lies in their being a test of character, since they reveal seekers for truth. They also help clarify an obscure point by relating it to something known and understood. The common sight of a sower, a woman kneading bread, a draught of fish—all can be used to teach.

What if earth  
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein  
Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought?  
(Milton, *Paradise Lost*.)

The lakeside parables form the first major occasion of teaching with this means. In subsequent days, other aspects of the kingdom will be spotlighted by these "earthy stories."

The reader will soon note that Matthew and Luke record the major part of the parables. Mark has some. John has a few or none, depending upon definition. This last thought also determines just how many parables are given. Some list 27, 30, 34 and up to 50.

Interpretation of them is a major problem, since a few agree upon what is to be considered as mere drapery, or intended for comparison. The only sure interpretation is by the author, whether Jesus or someone else. A second important point is that parables may clarify issues, but should not be used for establishing doctrine. A parable, as any figure of speech, is intended only to illustrate.

A parable then is a means of light, and not intended for a mystery. Jesus intended to challenge people into thinking—people of His day. He doubtless did not give them so clever people twenty centuries later could finally discern the point, while all who had gone before could not do so.

The eight parables uttered on this occasion aptly illustrate facts of the kingdom, and its subjects. The sower and the soil—each an important part of farm life, and of the kingdom. The features of this parable would be easily imagined—the man going out from the village to a hillside with its varied soil; here shallow, there rich and deep. Thorns, weeds, a bridle path, birds attendant. Such is the audience almost any time the gospel is preached. Ex-

perience will teach this to the preacher. Yet God has so made man, and the gospel that though the start is small (the mustard seed, the leaven) and the growth rather seen than understood (Mark's seed), yet the result is sometimes one hundred fold, whether of the kingdom or individually. So the sower must not despair.

Hearing is decisive of results, too! So Jesus pinpoints the other side: how each person determines what his life will be. We can let worldly cares, desire for riches and multifarious other things turn us into no-account soil. Likewise, we can put all we have into procurement of the best over the better (the pearl, and the hid treasure), secure in the knowledge that such is right. We may not know how evil arrived, but rather than spend time seeking to find that answer, we will let our light shine, and leave that problem in the good hands of Jesus (the lamp, and the tares) while we sow seed. In the end of the age, the Son of man, even Jesus the coming Judge, Acts 17:30, 31, will separate good from bad, and justice will triumph. A final parting shot: a wise householder will learn to value what is true and good, whether old or new. The old is not bad because it is old, for it was new once. The new is not inherently good because it is new. Wisdom will treat both with due respect. So the kingdom and its inclusion in one's life is a job life-long, at once good news and a surprise package as yet unopened.

The kingdom is free to all, yet it demands all from any. We then can not be an impulsive disciple, or a casual one, nor have a divided mind about it. Conversely, resolve, abiding interest and a single eye (cf. Matt. 6:22-23) should be the possession of every disciple. The men who offered excuses in substitute for obedience got what they deserved—a reprimand. Jesus describes Himself as the "Son of man" (over eighty times in the Gospels) and He knew that these men could do differently. True

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greatness does not consist in possessions but in person, not collateral but character. Respect for obligations is mandatory; but we must have the right priorities. Yea: first things first! Nothing and no one must have a hold upon us that prohibits service to Christ. Any farm boy surely knows that a straight furrow is not possible if one is *always* looking back (the force of the Greek participle) rather than concentrating ahead (cf. Philippians 3:13-14). We must look ahead, which in this context means to put Christ first—always.

*Sea of Galilee*—Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41;  
Lk. 8:22-25

“The sea is the shape of a harp—so we will call it Chinnereth,” Num. 34:11; Deut. 3:17; Josh. 13:27; or “Chinneroth” Josh. 12:3, I Kings 15:20. Perhaps this is the way the people gave what we know as the Sea of Galilee a name. A town by this name was on the north-west shore of the sea, Josh. 19:35. Also known as the Sea of Gennesaret, Lk. 5:1, and of Tiberias, John 6:1, 21:1, the Sea of Galilee is located some sixty miles north of Jerusalem on the Jordan River. Some 685 feet below sea level, with hills on all sides, it has a warm climate that produces some tropical vegetation, such as fig trees, palms, etc. Jewish rabbis are reported to have said that God had created seven seas, but the Sea of Gennesaret was His delight.

With Mt. Hermon (visible to the north) and the high country to the north of it, and other physical features like its below-sea-level depth, cold air currents from the northern plateaus sweep down to the small lake (about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide—though varying dimensions are given for it) and meet warm air coming up from the Jordan below (which is still falling,

dropping some 590 feet more to the Dead Sea) causing sudden violent storms such as our text describes (see also Matt: 14).

Around the lake were many cities of importance in Jesus' day—Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, on the north and to the west of the Jordan; while Magdala and Tiberias farther down on the west side (the latter built by Herod Antipater in honor of the Roman ruler) completed this section. Bethsaida Julia (the capital of Philip the tetrarch, and named for a daughter of Augustus named Julia) on the east side of the Jordan near the north entrance, and Gergesa complete the cities of note on the east side in Jesus' day.

Unbelief brings fear, doubt and despair. The cry of "We are perishing, do you not care, Master?" was a cry of unbelief. It was the idea of the disciples, not of Jesus, that they were perishing. Jesus gave the command to cross the sea, and the disciples, and the other people in their own boats, should have trusted Him for a safe arrival. But the element of distrust produces the wrong sort of question to God. Rightly, they were rebuked. Their faith had long since grabbed a life preserver and flung itself overboard. Oh men of little faith!

For us—is there any essential difference in their faith-lapse and our lives? Do we fear that God can not keep us if He sends us somewhere? whether in a boat or 180 feet on the land below the boat?

*Gergesa—Matt. 8:28—9:1; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39*

This city has always had problems! Among others is the fact that its name is variously spelled Gergesa, Gerasa, or sometimes changed to Gadara; and that two of its citizens (so I assume) were demon-possessed. The last factor doubtless was rather embarrassing to the towns-



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people, since they could not forge chains strong enough to hold them (or at least one of the two). Perhaps the man was so demonized that they were afraid to attempt to chain him after several failures. The men had left the town, and were dwelling in some tombs near it.

Jesus met these two men, one of whom was apparently the more outstanding, and the demons so controlled the one man that at times he spoke and then they spoke. First worshipping Jesus, and then giving vent to the question of the demons, the men were pitiable to behold. At Jesus' command, the men were released of the demons. At their request (their utterance in v. 28a is the same idea, in almost identical Greek expressions, as Jesus expressed to His mother in John 2:4) and with Jesus' permission, the demons entered into some two thousand swine (the text offers no reason why they asked this nor why Jesus permitted them to so do) nearby and caused them to rush violently down a steep cliff and perish in the Sea of Galilee. The men were left in their right mind, and sent to the cities around the Decapolis (which meant ten cities) area including Gergesa. Man's extremity is truly God's opportunity.

"Please . . . leave."—and Jesus left the area of Gergesa, recrossing the sea to Capernaum. He will return to the Decapolis area not many months hence, but now is not the time to minister there.

*Capernaum*—*Matt.* 9:18-26; *Mk.* 5:21-43;  
*Lk.* 8:40-56

Numberless songs have found their impulse from the Bible, and not a few sayings. One of the last finds its source in our text. The "hem of the garment" is this one. The woman of our text, her living spent and the affliction unchecked, had despaired of being healed. But

as God would have it, an entirely unrelated circumstance occurred, and the chance of a lifetime materialized. Faith reached out and found the power of God could do what man could not. Need we say more?

Man can do many things today—we marvel at transplanted hearts, and then pay them scant notice. We sit glued to the sight of men walking on the moon, and then cease even to bother with the next launch. But death still offers a challenge. It seems to have always been so.

Jairus, his daughter at the point of death, thought Jesus was the last and ultimate solution to his problem. How right he was! But one can imagine his annoyed expression as the woman caused Jesus to stop and waste precious time, for the twelve-year old was near death. If he were annoyed, it surely turned to grief when a messenger from his house informed him that his efforts were in vain. The girl was dead—but dead to whom?

Jesus quickly assured him that the situation was not changed—and proved it. The mourners were treated to drama in real life: they had never seen it this way before (and so laughed at Jesus, when He told them their tears were vain). But Jairus laughed last and best. Mourning as the world does is not needed when Jesus is around, I Thess. 4:13-18. He had remarked in John 5:28 that those whom we call dead would hear His voice and come forth. The son of the widow at Nain and this young girl are evidence that they (whom we call dead) are quite alive to God. (Further remarks about the "dead" will be found in the discussion under point 72 (6), as well as John 11.)

Though success and consequent fame were evident nearly everywhere in Jesus' ministry, as seen in the healing of the two blind men and the dumb demoniac at the last of Matt. 9, some did not share in these. The reason: they did not wish it to be so.

*Nazareth—Matt. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6*

The immediate text chronicles probably the final visit of Jesus in His boyhood home. He had appeared here before (point # 23) but with little success, barely escaping with His life. This visit is hardly an improvement. They again found early associations of Jesus a problem for their acceptance of Him. Like the people of John 6, they refused to consider all the facts involved, and so found Jesus a "hard saying." He could do but few miracles because both opportunity and reason to do so were absent. Jesus had earlier marveled at the faith of the centurion, Matt. 8:5-13, (who would have been considered a Gentile sinner by people of Nazareth) and now He marvels at the unbelief of home town people. How true the proverb was about honor. Familiarity breeds contempt sometimes, and the gospel writers record two events where it was so (here and John 4:43-45). Yet one can not help but wonder why they disbelieved so greatly.

We have remarked under point # 7 about Jesus' brothers and sisters. We again remind you that the context identifies Jesus with Mary, and so too with the four men mentioned as His brothers. Perhaps James is most prominent (Acts 15; and perhaps I Cor. 15:8, and likely the author of James), though Judas may be Jude, author of the book Jude. We remark in passing that the word "carpenter" is not the only possible translation of the Greek Word. It also describes any worker of metal, stone or wood.

*Third Galilean Tour—Matt. 9:35-38; 10:1-42;  
Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6*

The harvest: great—the harvesters: few. The close of chapter nine in Matthew recorded this observation by Jesus. The lost sheep of Israel were scattered, having no

shepherd, and in need of compassion from someone. Jesus was that one. He taught the disciples, and also us to pray to the harvest Lord . . . and then plan to answer that prayer. It was as if He said, "You are the finger of God . . . don't you see?" Jesus never taught that we should expect some other person to do what God has for us to do. Practicing what He preached, the twelve were called together, given both instructions and the necessary power, and then sent out among those scattered sheep.

The tenth chapter of Matthew is valuable for us today, especially in respect to any mission endeavor or prospective mission worker. In it Jesus points out 1) the urgent need to both preach and respond to preaching. The kingdom of Heaven was at hand then. The church and our association with it bear the same imperative today. He reminds the disciples that the evangelist must not waste time with those who do not wish to hear. Other people (in places akin to Macedonia) are waiting for someone to come. 2) The Lord will adequately provide. Therefore, make no more provision than absolutely necessary. Every laborer is worth the support he gets, and people properly taught this will respond. He teaches that they received without charge, so give without charge. Yet God would provide for them, and they were to expect Him to do so through those to whom they preached. We are then, as servants of the most high God, neither to trust self only, nor leave everything up to God. He is our partner, true, but He has no mind but ours to use in planning what is needed. 3) We must preach the good news regardless of the consequences. Again, the immense cost of rejecting God's message is spelled out. The gospel is only good news if accepted! Resistance is the norm, He says, even to family groups. But He did not come to make everyone feel righteous and needing nothing (Cf. Rev. 3:14ff.). Often He will warn His disciples of

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coming opposition (note John 15:18—16:4). Our relationship to Him will guarantee opposition for us. Therefore: "gird your armor on, stand firm everyone." Yet, "be not dismayed what e'er betide, God will take care of you." We are not greater than our Master. Besides, God sees and knows all. He is the One Who will rightly judge. If we remain true, we shall be saved. Only those who fail to fear God will be sorry, for He will cast them into hell. 4) The high cost of serving Him. But as just remarked, the cost is greater for refusing to serve Him. We must therefore get our priorities right, even about our immediate family. It is a case of losing to find, of keeping by giving, and living by dying. With this sort of attitude, everything we do is of eternal consequence. Jesus often points out the little things of importance: the idle word, Matt. 12:37, the widow's gift, Mk. 12, the one pound, Lk. 19:20, the hair on your head, and the fallen sparrow. Here: the cup of cold water. Life is made up of years, but years of minutes. If we are not trustworthy in smaller things. . . (Lk. 16:10)?

Is it not interesting that Jesus always tries to lift our eyes to God—through the mundane things of life—never to treat the world and all that is in it as if it were not there. But neither to think that it is all there is, either. Both positions are damning. The disciple will use all wisely, whether body, or material possessions, or family. It is of interest that Jesus teaches that the only enduring thing is the relationship to Him. In this light think about your attachment to family, the blood ties you have. Then consider what Jesus teaches in this text, 10:34-37, and in Matt. 12:46-50. Does He ever tell you that you are to love blood relatives more than you are to love relatives through Christ? Which relationship will last longest? The old saying that "blood is thicker than water" has never been true and still is not true, nor will it be. Christian

baptism puts a person into an eternal relationship, unless the person severs it himself. May we set our minds on things above (that is: get the important things in life straight!). Consider how much the New Testament teaches us about how to consider and treat Christian brothers and sisters. Compare this with the teaching spent on blood relationships. The Bible teaches us to keep both in their place. The same Greek words are used of the relationships in Christ, as are used for fleshly ties. But the spiritual ties are the only ones eternal in nature. Hence, we will do well to consider earthly relationships in the light of the New Testament.

*Third Galilean Tour—Matt. 14:1-12;  
Mk. 6:14-29; Lk. 9:7-9*

Our attention is drawn now to one of the tragedies of life: the killing of God's messenger because he told the truth. The warning of Jesus in Matt. 10 about whom to fear (see also Lk. 12:1ff.) is ever timely. John told the truth to Herod Antipater (Antipas) and it ultimately cost him his physical life. How much better though to lose what we can not keep to gain what we can not lose!

The killing of John through the subtleness of Herodias, the shamelessness of Salome, and the spinelessness of Herod has always brought to mind facts like 1) God's Word is the same for all, and 2) God expects His messengers to trust Him, not regardless of the evidence, but regardless of the consequences. How brightly John shines in this regard! No marvel that Jesus said, "None greater has been born by woman."

John was not the first nor the last man to lose his head over a dance. History is made ugly oftentimes by just such scenes as our text records. The Greek word describing the dance of Salome means she stooped to the

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level of a common prostitute. Herod, with no backbone and doubtless drunken, was no match for this nor the clever Herodias. Modern day parallels abound. As this is written, the current Reader's Digest contains the story of a French government representative who through a woman fell into the clutches of the Russian government. How sad! We only comment about Herod that he should have broken an oath that would cause him to do wrong. No oath should be made or kept that ultimately proves sinful. Such is our thinking also about Jephthah's vow in Judges 11:29-40. Regardless of what actually occurred in respect to his daughter, he should have changed his vow if it finally conflicted with a law of God. We should make no vows except as we recognize that they ultimately relate to God (Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12).

*Bethsaida Julias*—Matt. 14:13-23b; Mk. 6:30-46;  
Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-17

“. . . to a lonely place apart.” John had been killed and when Jesus was informed of it, He desired solitude. He had feelings too, and as before remarked, was not less human than we. Nor was He less divine, we believe, because of them. Mark's account relates that the withdrawal was also for the sake of the disciples. They had been on tour and having returned needed the rest and quietness. They needed to “come apart . . . before they came apart.” Even God knows we have physical limitations. Relaxation may be done many ways, but the physical body demands it somehow. Perhaps this is why God created us to do the natural thing called sleep. We may not have enough sense to relax any other way. However, we conclude that to our own Master we stand or not. May each of us consider our own life's stewardship in this matter. We must not condemn others whose desire to

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serve God perhaps surpasses ours, but whose ideas about relaxation are, to us, different at best or seemingly wasteful at worst.

Yet life goes on and, as in Phoenicia not long after, Jesus could not be hid. The year's labors, the preaching tour, the death of John the favorite of the people: all combined to result in a great throng following Christ.

The large crowd was doubtless composed of many from nearby areas. But Passover time was near (note John 6:4; and Mark's "green grass" in verse 39) and many pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem may have been part of the crowd. Perhaps some were there (as is implied in John 6:15) because since John was dead they now turned to Jesus as their hope for a leader against Rome. Remember that one of Jesus' disciples was a former member of the Zealots, a group actively working for overthrow of Roman rule. One can only marvel that a riot did not occur. Probably the action of Jesus in sending His disciples away (were they for the crowning of Jesus?) before the dismissal of the crowds kept such from taking place.

Jesus, the disciples, and the large throng were apparently on the high hills east of the Sea of Galilee near the area known as Bashan. This area was cattle country especially, and cities were not so numerous. Thus we read that when it came time for the evening meal, the scarcity of food was a problem. Or at least it was to the disciples. Jesus had no problem for He had already anticipated the next major incident. He asks Philip about bread for the group. Philip quickly reckons that the crowd is so great that two hundred day's wages (see Matt. 20:2) would not suffice to buy even enough bread so that everyone would have some to eat. The only thing sufficient was Jesus. He caused the people to sit down in orderly groups (which helps us see how the size of the



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multitude was known to some extent) so that they might be fed. The blessing of the food was followed by the miraculous feast. We think it is rather superficial to suggest that Jesus shamed the crowd into bringing out their own lunches and sharing with others by telling them about the little boy's example. In fact, such explanation amounts to unbelief. The text plainly declares (as does Matt. 16:5-12) that Jesus miraculously fed the crowd here, and in Perea some three to four months later. The warning Jesus gives in Matt. 16 about the leaven of false teachers needs *our* attention.

The multitude fed, the disciples were ordered to "pick up the pieces." Jesus had *kept giving* (the meaning of the Greek word) bread to the disciples until all were satisfied. Now the remnants were not to be wasted. The broken pieces left amounted to a total equal to twelve baskets. These particular baskets were the size used to carry Levitically-clean food. The baskets in the feeding of the 4,000 were larger. In fact, they would hold a man! For one of these was Paul's means of escape in Damascus (Acts 9:25).

The disciples, their task of clean-up accomplished, immediately were told to get in the boat and leave. Then Jesus dismissed the crowds Himself and struck off into the hills avoiding the rush—the rush, that is, to force Him to become their king. Satan does not miss a trick, does he? How tempting to have said "yes" to the unspoken (?) request of the crowd. They had no shepherd at all now since John was dead. Would Jesus become their leader? Consider the thing from the viewpoint of the crowd. John had been their spokesman. Many were disciples of John, and had been for sometime. John was even thought to be like the Messiah, if not the Messiah, Lk. 3. Now he was dead. But Jesus was also popular, had many disciples, and could work miracles (such as the one in our

text) coupled with the ability to even raise dead people. What more could you want, if you were in their place? The "great society" was but an affirmative answer away!

## THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

### RETIREMENTS AND TRAVEL WITH THE TWELVE (about 6 months)

*Sea of Galilee*—Matt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-52;  
Jn. 6:15-21

Toward morning Jesus returned to the disciples for they had a problem. The tempestuous wind and sea had completely thwarted their efforts (though they were probably used to boats) to arrive at land. Walking toward them on the water, Jesus brought to light again their unbelief. They had been *tormented* by the wind and waves (the Greek word conveys the idea of tortured like slaves) but at the sight of Jesus they became completely undone. So afraid were they that He had to speak to them that their fear might be overcome.

Peter provides the example of a man whose mind is divided. James reminds us that such a man is unstable in all his ways, 1:6-8. The point is that indecision in one area of life if continually practiced soon permeates all our thought processes, and we become as a tossed wave: subject to the elements about us, and no longer in control of self. Jesus gave Peter the privilege of walking on water, but Peter could not keep his mind as it was when he first stepped overboard. So he began to take on some water, and shouted for help. Jesus pointed out that his doubt caused the water to give way under his feet. Mark records that the hard hearts of them all caused their fear. They simply refused to admit what the feeding of the 5,000 really proved about Jesus!