

The Go Gospel (Mark)

A DISCUSSION GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF MARK

by
Dr. Manford George Gutzke

Foreword

What the Gospel of Mark is all about is disclosed in its opening verse: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Jesus himself wrote no autobiography – he left no writing at all. And Mark's Gospel is not primarily a biography. But the person of Jesus Christ dominates its pages from beginning to end. Though long periods of his life are passed over in silence, a series of episodes in that life are set forward which unite to give a clear-cut portrait.

In Mark's account, the Man dominates his message. Primarily we see Christ in action rather than hear him quietly teaching. Then the titanic events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection form a ringing climax to all that has gone before.

The Go Gospel is a series of studies of Mark's Gospel and manifests a mastery of its content. But more, this volume rigorously applies that Gospel to one's daily life. Thus while we find in these pages sharp criticism of a materialist view of life, we do not find an otherworldly spirit of the sort that renders one impotent in the face of practical challenges. Indeed, the book itself presents the preeminent challenge: a call to us to live out our lives in vital response to Jesus Christ himself. When his call is found to conflict with the counsel of friends or the spirit of our times, we are not left in doubt as to which course we are to follow.

How to Use This Book

This is a daily devotional and study workbook. Here are some suggestions for its most profitable use.

Study the Scriptures daily, using the Bible readings in this book as your guide. There are Bible readings for every day of the week. Always begin by asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and give you a personal message for the day. Read with a pencil in your hand and use the blank spaces at the bottom of pages to record your responses to the questions asked.

On the last page of each chapter you will find "Make a Decision." Read this after you have completed the daily studies for the chapter. Determine to apply what you have learned during the week in your Bible study. Develop the habit of searching the Scriptures for the solutions to life's problems. The last pages of this book contain a list of books for further reading which will enrich your study as you refer to them.

It is also suggested that you use a notebook as you study, to record your further comments, questions and answers concerning the passages of Scripture you have read.

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Relief in Sight

Bible reading for this week: Isaiah 40:1-11

Trouble can be very tiresome. Pain, suffering and strain can wear down the spirit until just living is a burden. At times like these to see relief coming is wonderful.

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers peace and rest. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Bible says the whole world was created by God. Everything that happens is known to God. He knows all about man in his trouble.

God is merciful and kind. God is able to save man out of his trouble. What he will do in compassion to help man, he does through Jesus Christ. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

1. What is the gospel?

I Corinthians 15:1-8

The Christian gospel is the message to the world from Christians. The Bible sets it forth. Christians believe it. Missionaries proclaim it. The church teaches it. It would seem everybody should be acquainted with it, but as a matter of fact relatively few persons really know it. Yet it is very simple.

Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they were being saved by the gospel which he had preached among them, and which they had believed (see verses 1, 2). Then he outlined the message he had brought to them (verses 3-8). Here we have sketched before us the authentic outline of the Christian gospel. We can be grateful to Paul that he wrote so plainly.

The gospel is about Jesus Christ and what he did for sinners. Each statement about him has a definite meaning for the soul who receives him as Saviour and believes in him as Lord.

Four facts about Jesus Christ are set forth with some clue as to their meaning. First he "died for our sins according to the scriptures." The world knows that he died, but not everyone understands that he died for sinners, and for the reason which the Scriptures teach. Since the New Testament had not yet been written, Paul meant that the significance of Christ's dying for sinners is shown in the Old Testament Scriptures. This is what John had in mind when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." His hearers would recognize the term "the Lamb of God" in the light of the ritual of worship taught in the Old Testament, where the atonement was based on shed blood.

Not only did Christ Jesus die for sinners, but he was buried; he rose again from the dead; and he was seen to be actually alive in the newness of life. This is the pattern of the salvation which God will bring to pass for all who receive Christ and believe in him.

Why did Jesus come into the world (Luke 19:1-10)? How did Jesus feel about his own career on earth (Matthew 20:28)? When Jesus spoke of his death, did he expect to stay dead (Mark 9:31)? By Christ Jesus' death at Calvary what did he actually do for all men who put their trust in him (Hebrews 2:14, 15)? If a sinner receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour who died for his sins, to what can he look forward (I John 3:1, 2)?

2. Who is Jesus?

Matthew 1:21

Jesus of Nazareth was the babe of Bethlehem, "the holy infant so tender and mild" about whom the Christmas carols are sung. He was the One who was laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn.

Jesus was the twelve-year-old boy who tarried in the Temple asking questions of the learned rabbis. Jesus was the second cousin of John the Baptist; their mothers were cousins and close friends.

Jesus came to be baptized of John – when the heavens opened, and the words were heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus began to preach when he was about thirty years of age, and to perform miracles that astonished all who saw him. He aroused the opposition of the authorities and was eventually betrayed by one of his apostles.

Jesus was condemned to death in Pilate's courtroom, abused by the soldiers, scorned by the people and crucified between two thieves. He was laid away in a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea.

All this is well known, but this is not all that is told about Jesus. He was born of a virgin and his birth was heralded by a "multitude of the heavenly host." He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He was transfigured in glorious appearance before Peter, James and John, and on the third day after his death he was raised from the dead.

After he had "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days," he ascended into heaven in full view of the whole company of disciples.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

What is the meaning of the name Jesus? Why was this child of Mary to be given this name?

What was predicted that the seed of the woman would do (Genesis 3:15)? Was the creation of Adam a greater miracle than the virgin birth of Jesus? Why or why not? If Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Son of God incarnate, why would the virgin birth seem necessary (John 17:5)? What would seem to be an adequate answer to any question about the possibility of the virgin birth (Luke 1:34-37)? List all the reasons why this doctrine of the virgin birth is important.

3. Why is he called Christ?

Acts 2:36

"Christ" is the title of the person whom God would choose to perform his will in the fulfillment of his plan for the whole creation. The Bible tells God's plan to create persons who would be the brethren of his beloved Son. God created Adam and in him a countless number of human beings who would be born in the flesh as children of Adam. Because Adam sinned before they were born, all his children are sinful, and so we are unfit to live eternally with God.

In grace God planned to save by his power any and all who would come to him. Such salvation would be the work of one person, chosen of God to save his people. This promised person was called "the Chosen One." Because he would be anointed of God to rule over all creation he was also called "the Anointed One." In Hebrew this word is "Messiah." In Greek it is "Christ." He is the One chosen to perform whatever would be necessary to save any sinful child of Adam who would be willing to come to God.

To say that Jesus of Nazareth is "the Christ" means that he is the One chosen of God to save believing persons out of their sinful natures, out of this world, by bringing them into the family of God to be adopted as the sons of God, and by transforming them out of the flesh into the spirit.

The maneuver by which this salvation is accomplished is carried through by Jesus of Nazareth

himself. The plan is that the Son of God should be made flesh as the children of Adam, yet without sin, and die in the flesh, be buried for a time as dead, and then be raised from the dead in the newness of life by the power of God. This is the course of action taken by Jesus of Nazareth. This was the function that the Chosen One of God should perform. It is because he died for our sins, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead that Jesus of Nazareth is properly called "The Christ."

What did Moses call the One who would arise from among the people to lead them in the will of God (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)?

What did the prophet Isaiah call him (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 11:1; 53:11)? What did John call him (John 1:1, 14)? What name do you prefer? Why?

4. Who is John the Baptist?

Isaiah 40:3-8

Salvation is the work of God through Christ whom God sent into the world to do what was necessary that men could become children of God. Christ does his saving work only in such persons as will receive him. What he will do is so different from anything a man would expect, that man must be prepared in advance to be ready and willing to accept him.

The simple truth is that a soul must be ready to give up on himself and yield himself to the will of God to let God come into his heart "to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Actually when a man sins he is already doomed to die. But the natural man does not realize this by himself. When he is shown by the revealed Word of God that he is condemned, he is often ready to listen to an offer of forgiveness and of a new life.

Such a promise is offered in Christ. To be ready to appreciate and to accept this offer in Christ, a soul must confess sin and repent. What brings any soul to repentance is the preaching of the law of God. That any man may be ready to accept Christ he must realize his lost condition because of sin.

During the times of Christ when the king would plan to come to a community it was customary to send out in advance heralds who would clear the road and prepare the people for the coming of the king. John the Baptist served as a forerunner of Jesus Christ, preaching repentance that men might be ready to accept the salvation that was in Christ Jesus.

What was the message "the voice in the wilderness" cried out? In what sense was the call to repentance by John the Baptist a fulfillment of Isaiah 40:4? What aspect of human nature is referred to in Isaiah 40:6-8? By way of contrast, in what is man called to put his trust other than himself? What does "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" mean (Matthew 3:8)? Does your having a godly father eliminate the necessity of your repenting (Matthew 3:9)? Explain. What is the message of John the Baptist to you personally?

5. What does it mean to repent?

II Corinthians 7:10, 11

To "repent" involves my taking a truthful look at myself – at my own interests, desires, choices and values. Since God is my Creator I can get an idea what he would want me to be like by looking at his Word. I can see what he is like by reading the Scriptures, but even more plainly by looking at Jesus of Nazareth. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus was the last word about God.

By looking at Jesus of Nazareth I see what a sinner I am. He could say, "The Son can do nothing of himself." And yet he did all things to please his Father. I see myself doing what I want to do, going where I want to go, taking part in what I think will please me.

When Isaiah saw the glory of God he was smitten with a realization of his own sin: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Job said, "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

Being sorry for my sins is not repentance. If it is godly sorrow, it can lead to repentance, but just being sorry is like crying over spilt milk. By itself it really makes no difference. "The sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Corinthians 7:10).

To repent is not promising to do better. It is an honest admission that I am a sinner and that in myself there dwelleth no good thing.

How does repentance prepare a soul to accept Jesus Christ? Why do "thieves, publicans and harlots" often find it easier to accept Christ than do more respectable people? Why does a "rich man" find it so hard to accept Christ? List some of the evidence that repentance would uncover to show that you need to be saved.

6. How was the ministry of Jesus different?

Mark 1:7, 8

Living in this world is not a simple matter. To continue living it is necessary to receive some things and it is necessary to reject some things. There is food to eat and there is poison to avoid. Some situations are helpful and some situations are harmful. There are things I must do and there are things I must not do. About these things the newborn child is ignorant.

The child must learn how to live. Normally he has parents who will show him, and help him to learn. Later, a person may have friends who will help him to find the good way.

There are teachers and guides who will offer help and information to enable a person to choose the good things. To be able to do this the teacher must know what he is sharing with others. Blind leaders of the blind can only bring tragedy and loss to those who follow.

If any teacher tried to tell you what to do that you might please God and win his favor, it would be most important that that teacher know what to do from his own personal experience. If the teacher can tell you only what others have said, but he actually does not know himself, you may never know for sure what ought to be done.

When Jesus of Nazareth taught about God he was speaking of his Father. When he told about what God would do, he could and did demonstrate by actually doing by the power of God what only God could do. When he told his disciples about God he could ask them to look at himself: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

How was his ministry different from that of John the Baptist (Mark 1:7, 8)?

How was his teaching different from that of the scribes (Matthew 7:28, 29)? How was his teaching different from that of the Pharisees? What would be the difference in receiving instruction about traveling in a certain city from a man with a map who had never been there and in being directed by a man who lived in that city? What would Jesus of Nazareth know about God that the scribes and Pharisees did not know? Do you have "firsthand" experience with God?

7. The first big test for Jesus after he was baptized by John

Mark 1:9-13

Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, who had come to do what was necessary to save men unto eternal life. He would keep the law of God perfectly, obeying his Father's will in every detail. He would

offer himself without spot as the perfect Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

When he was baptized by John the Baptist there came a voice from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Evidently this public identification attracted attention to him, and he was immediately confronted by a major temptation from Satan. In three significant areas he was tested as to whether he would totally obey the Word of God.

When Adam was created he was given a simple command that he must not eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). Surrounded by the Garden of Eden he sinned in disobedience.

Now the second man (I Corinthians 15:47) after forty days of fasting in the desert is tempted to disobey because of hunger; but he is steadfast in his obedience. His one guiding principle is, "It is written," thereby establishing forever his will to obey the will of his Father.

Just as Adam sinned by following his own judgment apart from God, so Jesus of Nazareth obeyed by remembering what the Word of God said. Herein is the very essence of the righteousness of Christ: humble obedience to the will of God. Having set this as his purpose he followed it all the days of his life (Matthew 26:42).

What are the three classic avenues of temptation for the natural man (I John 2:16)? Which of these three avenues did the first temptation challenge (Matthew 4:3)? Which aspect did the second temptation challenge (Matthew 4:5, 6)? Which aspect did the third temptation challenge (Matthew 4:8, 9)? What are some common temptations that appeal to appetite? What common temptations appeal to imagination? What temptations appeal to pride? What has Christ Jesus promised the person who trusts him as his lord and Saviour when he faces temptation (I Corinthians 10:13)?

Make a Decision

Living day in and day out here and now can be lived on one of two planes. There is the plane where you try to make it alone, thus experiencing failure and loneliness. On the other plane life can be lived with help from God, with his companionship.

Christ Jesus has promised us this good life if we will only let him come into our lives and do our living for us. Have you made this decision? Do you know what it means never to be alone? If not, this blessed experience can be yours right now. Why not open up your heart and let the Lord Jesus Christ come in? He will.

Word from the Boss

Bible reading for this week: John 12:20-50

When there is a mix-up or a mistake or a difference of opinion as to what to do – what is needed then is a word from the boss.

The Bible shows that God is over all. The gospel tells the good news that Almighty God is acting in kindness through his Son Jesus Christ for persons who believe in him.

Man is in trouble because he disobeyed God. He cannot make things right; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come to provide salvation for all who believe.

The Bible records some of Christ's mighty works which he did to identify himself as coming from God. These works show that he has authority in every kind of situation.

1. How was the teaching of Jesus new?

Mark 1:21, 22

All living is not the same in its results. Some lives are fortunate, gaining more and more peace and joy as time goes by. Others are unfortunate in that there is unhappiness and distress. It is not hard to see that difference in experience depends largely on difference in procedure. How a person does has a lot to do with what a person experiences.

So much in living needs to be learned. No one is born with a knowledge of how to act. Learning can be definitely helped by a capable teacher. But a teacher cannot help if he doesn't know. "Such as I have give I thee" is always the way it goes with teaching.

Many teachers get their ideas from what they see or read about in the lives of others. There are always those who will discuss ways of doing and being which they have personally never experienced. Often they try to explain with big words what they really know nothing about in actual participation.

There is naturally something superficial and unreal about what they say or write.

Jesus of Nazareth was altogether different. What he taught he had personally performed. When he taught that a man should worship God by obeying his Word, he was speaking about his own Father with whom he was in constant communion. "I do always those things that please him." "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Why did Jesus never have to argue that God existed (John 14:9)? Did Jesus teach something which was different from the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17, 18)? In what way was it different? With what teachers in his time did Jesus differ (Matthew 5:20; 7:29)?

How did Jesus feel about teachers who did not agree with his teaching (Matthew 12:30)? How did Jesus explain that some teachers were in error (Matthew 15:3-9)? What did Jesus say about the Pharisees as teachers (Matthew 15:14)? What advice did Jesus give about how a person should heed the words of insincere teachers (Matthew 23:3)? How should you feel about teachers who are not real believers?

2. How was the authority of Jesus demonstrated?

Mark 1:23-26

A person has authority when he can carry out in action any claim he makes. If a man claims he can close a passageway, and when challenged does actually close that passage, we say he has authority to do so. If a man claims to speak for the owner of a business, and when challenged the owner acts as his agent claimed he would, we say the agent had authority to speak for his boss. If a man claims certain data are authentic and true, and upon examination it is found that the facts agree with his claims, we say that person spoke with authority.

Often men speak giving only their own opinions or reporting the opinions of others but are not able to carry out the claims in what they said. It is said of such that they spoke without authority. Such talk can be very misleading, and can bring another into disaster or cause loss.

Jesus of Nazareth claimed he was at one with God his Heavenly Father. He claimed that the Father had given all power to him as the Son. Demons recognized him as the Son of God. When he commanded the demons they obeyed in doing exactly what he told them to do. Obviously he had authority to direct them.

In order to benefit by this record the reader must accept the reality of demons. If demons do not exist, then this account is of no significance except as evidence that the Scriptures are not to be trusted; Obviously if there are no demons, then nothing was demonstrated. But if the record is held to be true, then the authority of Jesus over demons was demonstrated in this incident.

**Why would it be difficult for Jesus to demonstrate his authority in the world of demons?
Why is it important to know for sure that Jesus had authority over demons?**

How can spiritual creatures affect human beings? What makes it so comforting to know that Jesus has authority over spiritual beings? Do you think your life can be affected by evil spirits? What are some of the ways in which you could be helped if Jesus exercised authority over spiritual beings?

3. What was amazing about the teaching of Jesus?

Mark 1:27, 28

In our culture teaching is very common. On every side there are persons offering to give ideas about anything and everything. Schools are to be found in every area of interest. Public schools, private schools, trade schools, business colleges, universities, seminaries, and conservatories present a vast number of teachers who are supposed to be able to help by telling us what to do and how to do it.

There are teachers who aim to help on spiritual matters. Sunday School teachers, youth workers, Bible class teachers, preachers, professors, theologians – all offer to help us understand and to guide us in what we might or should be doing for spiritual welfare.

It is sad but true that much of the teaching in spiritual matters amounts to discussions and interpretations of personal problems as matters of opinion and talk. Everyone seems to be anxious to tell everybody else what could and should be done. People go to Sunday School and to church to share in the activities but seldom does anyone expect to be any different or to do anything different as a result.

A person who has been dishonest may go to church where he may learn that his dishonesty is wrong, but may come away still a dishonest person. A man with doubts about his own relation to God may attend church and come away still uncertain about himself. This is not always the case, but very often it is true.

Jesus affected people to change them. Sad persons were comforted, weak persons were strengthened, doubtful souls were convinced! "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

What danger would there be if the chairman of relief funds were a person who never had any experience in money management?

How would the results of the teacher be affected if the men's Bible class did not believe the Bible to be true? What is meant by the term "conflict of interest" in government procedures? If I really understood the teaching of Jesus Christ what should happen?

4. How did Jesus demonstrate authority over nature?

Mark 1:29-31

The processes of nature are considered to be work of God. Stars move in their courses as God has made them. Trees grow, flowers bloom, birds fly, fish swim, babies are born according to the and ways of God. Sickness runs its course death comes according to the will of God. The great calamities such as earthquakes, volcano outbursts, tornadoes are called "acts of God."

It is understood that man can manipulate the processes of nature. Man can sow the seed, water the plants, but God gives the increase. If Jesus of Nazareth had used natural means to achieve natural results he would have been a man, but only a man. This would never have attracted any attention, nor would it ever have shown that he was God. When Christ began his public ministry as the Son of God, and asked men to believe in him as "the Christ," the Saviour of all who accept him, he began to perform works of the sort only God could do. By the exercise of his will, sickness was cured. When he spoke the word, leprosy was healed. He told the palsied man to stand up and walk, which the man did. He opened the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf and loosened the tongue of the dumb. He called the dead Lazarus to come out of his tomb, and the man who had been dead four days arose and came out. In all such acts he showed his authority over the natural processes.

But Christ's demonstration extended beyond the human body. He walked on the water, made the storm to cease, cursed the fig tree so that it withered, and multiplied the loaves and fish to feed the multitude.

Was the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:31) like the accomplishments of medical science today? How was it different? How was the feeding of the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-38) like a famine relief project? How was it different? What was unusual about the healing of the leper (Matthew 8:3)? What was unusual about the healing of the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13)? What understanding did the Centurion have that caused Jesus to marvel (Matthew 8:8, 9)?

5. How did Jesus demonstrate authority over demons?

Mark 1:32-34

The gospel teaches the reality of the spiritual world. This is hard for us to conceive because spirit is not subject to time and space. Yet spirit is real. Spiritual means anything that belongs in the world of spirit: either that it consists of spirit or that it is controlled by spirit.

The reality of demons does not depend on the existence of spiritual bodies, but it does mean there are spiritual beings.

The existence of God establishes the fact of the reality of a spiritual being. Angels are actual persons. Satan is a person who can think, feel and will. Demons are in this same category and are to be taken as persons.

How God controls spiritual beings is not described, but he is held to be sovereign over all. Why God ever allowed Satan to rebel and continue in a rebellious state is not explained, but that he has power over Satan is definitely revealed. That he will one day destroy Satan is promised.

The Bible records that Jesus of Nazareth commanded demons from time to time and that they obeyed his will.

In Mark 1:34 what shows that demons are real beings? What are some of the common arguments against holding that demons are real? Would the same arguments question the reality of God? If the authority of Jesus over demons is held to be real, what does this show about Jesus and the spiritual world?

When was the last time that you were affected in your conduct by the presence of others? Has your conduct ever been affected by the unspoken wishes of another person who was in your presence? What caused you to act when no words had been spoken to indicate the wishes of the other? If you have ever had a fear of spiritual beings how could this passage be of help to you? (Also see I John 4:4.)

6. How did Jesus show his relationship with God?

Mark 1:35-39

The things of God are hard to grasp because they are invisible. It is hard for some to feel sure they know him because there is nothing concrete to see or to handle. For this reason the Incarnation is so important – when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Jesus of Nazareth could say "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." John could write "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (I John 1:1).

Personal relationship with God is in the heart and so it is also hard to describe. About the only way this reality can be shared is in what a person does in outward conduct which implies and expresses the inner truth.

Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God in constant communion with his Father in Heaven. This gave significance to his actions and authority to his words. He wanted his disciples to know this for their own comfort and faith. They were to understand that whatever he said to them was from the Father.

At times Jesus would spend the whole night in prayer to God. Sometimes he would rise early in the morning "a great while before day" that he might spend time in prayer. At other times he would pray to God in the presence of his disciples. On one occasion while Jesus was praying he said to the Father that he was praying out loud for the learning of those round about him. Such conduct would show others how intimately he lived in fellowship with God.

On occasion when some special work was being done Jesus would pray to his Father for blessing, showing his dependence upon God.

In personal testimony Jesus told of the communion he shared with God. "I and my Father are one." "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth." "The Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "The Father . . . hath . . . given to the Son to have life in himself."

How did Jesus show that he was looking to God for guidance in his conduct? Did Jesus give the impression that he was equal to God (John 10:30)? How did Jesus speak of himself in relation to God (John 10:36)? How did Jesus speak of God's will in his conduct (John 6:38)? How long had Jesus been with God the Father as the Son of God (John 17:5)? When Jesus faced his greatest sorrow how did he feel about God (Matthew 26:36-39)? What are some of the actions of Jesus which showed his relationship with God?

7. How did Jesus show his relationship with man?

Mark 1:40-45

To think of God is to think of someone far away, high, holy, lifted up, in whose eyes man would seem to be small and insignificant. If he "holds the whole world in his hands" then in his sight anyone human being would appear to be something very unimportant. It would be natural to feel that I don't really matter much to the One who controls and directs the universe.

Since God is holy and of purer eyes than to behold evil it would be natural to feel that any one man as a sinner would really be very little in God's sight. It should be a common thing for men to say like Peter, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

It is the glory of the gospel to say, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us." The life of Jesus and work of Jesus of Nazareth showed clearly that he came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

If Jesus of Nazareth had been in himself only a man there would have been no need to show that he shared everything human. But since he was the Son of God who had been eternally in heaven and who was going back to heaven to be with his Father forever, it was important to show that he really understood and cared about the life and fortune of the children of men.

The body Jesus came to live in was entirely human (Hebrews 10:5) and it was said of him that he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is reported that he was wearied; that he slept soundly during the storm. He was hungry when he fasted, and he said he was thirsty on the cross.

How did Jesus feel about all men (Matthew 9:36)? Whom was Jesus willing to help (Matthew 11:28)? What was Jesus intending to do for the children of men (Matthew 20:28)? How did Jesus feel about little children (Matthew 19:14)? For whom did Jesus show a special interest (Luke 8:43-48)? To which class or classes of people did Jesus minister (Luke 7:36-50)? How did Jesus feel about the needs of men (Matthew 15:32)? Why did the Son of God take on himself the nature of Abraham rather than the nature of angels (Hebrews 2:14-16)? How did Jesus of Nazareth get along with the Roman government? How did Jesus get along with the high priest? How did Jesus get along with prominent religious parties? How did Jesus get along with the common people?

Make a Decision

As you studied this week you surely have taken note of the authority of Jesus Christ. We have seen how he is in complete control of everything – visible and invisible. We have seen him heal the sick, raise the dead, still the storm, and cast out demons. This was done to show us that he is God and that we can trust him. Is there anyone thing in your life you would like to have Jesus Christ straighten out? He is able and will on one condition – that you give your life and thus your problem to him.

He Got Action

Bible reading for this week: John 10:14-42

All over the world many voices are saying many different things about how to live. Most people listen and do nothing. Misery continues, nothing changes as men sink in despair.

Jesus of Nazareth took action in every situation he faced. He called men to action, saying, "He that is not for us is against us." He brought changes to pass that made a difference everywhere he went.

He healed the sick, he cast out demons, he made the lame to walk and the blind to see. He raised the dead, and made the storm to cease.

The common people heard him gladly. The rulers opposed him. The demons obeyed him. When he answered the critics they hated him.

1. What was the response of friends of the sick?

Mark 2:1-5

When our loved ones are sick we are most concerned. We suffer with them in their pain and feel bad in their distress. We want to help them any way we can.

Anybody is willing to go for a doctor. A man would stop anything to take time to go for medicine or to take an injured person to a hospital. Even in the case of strangers he would want to help the sick.

If you knew where a sick person could get help you would feel you must tell him, or even take him there.

All men seem to feel like this. Missionaries have always known that caring for the sick usually has the effect of winning pagans to give a hearing to the gospel.

There is something about being sick that is very much like being an unrepentant sinner. When I do not admit my wrongdoing and thus confess my sins, I am like a man with a disease. Guilt eats my heart out, just like disease germs in my body make me sick.

When Jesus of Nazareth wanted to show how God could and would take away guilt, he healed the sick in his grace by his Word. Just as he could heal the leper so he could deliver the sinful soul. This was why he healed the palsied man. "That ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

When once it was known that he could and would heal the sick, friends of the sick and crippled brought them to him to be healed by his power.

This is true even today. Friends of those who are in trouble, who have done wrong, who are helpless addicts to sinful desires, try to bring the unfortunate ones to Jesus Christ, that they might be helped. Parents who love their children want them to have the blessing of Christ Jesus.

What would you need to have in mind to talk to your neighbor about his soul? Would it be more difficult to warn your neighbor of his spiritual danger than of physical danger? Why? How would you witness to him? Cite Scripture you would use. When was the last time you talked to someone about his soul?

2. What was the response of the scribes who heard Jesus?

Mark 2:6-11

It is natural for man to want to understand events as they happen around him. The young child asks, "What's that?" The scientist inquires, "How did that happen?" Fortune-tellers can always make a living because people want to know why things happened as they did and also, what is going to happen tomorrow. Magicians can always fascinate people by producing unexpected results. On every side some are asking each other to explain what is happening, while some are constantly explaining what is going on.

When a man tells me what made something come to pass, he is giving me his theory. When another man makes something happen, he is showing me his practice. People who give theories often sound smarter and seem very profound. Men who "act" are often very simple and seem to be almost ordinary. But it is action that gets things done and brings blessing to others.

Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated power in action. The scribes were men who claimed to know theory. They talked about what others did and offered their opinion as to how actions should be understood and evaluated. They had elaborate ideas about things but they never did anything much. The common people felt that Jesus of Nazareth was actually more important because he brought things to pass. The common people were right, but the scribes were very critical of what Jesus did. They claimed his actions did not measure up to their ideas of what should be. When the people ignored the scribes and followed Jesus with appreciation in spite of what the scribes said, the scribes hated Jesus and were ready to help to destroy him.

In what way do people today seek to explain away "spiritual experience" as did the scribes? Why is it impossible to understand spiritual things by human reasoning alone? Explain I Corinthians 2:9-14, in the light of the above question. How is an unrepentant soul like a paralyzed man? Write out Luke 19:10. What does this verse mean to you?

3. What was the response of the healed man?

Mark 2:12, 13

There is something very simple about being healed from any sickness. No matter how awful a tooth may have been aching for days, there is something very quiet and common about how my mouth feels when the ache is gone! I may have been deathly sick with an upset stomach, yet when the pain is gone I can quickly forget how it was because now everything is just normal, and I feel fine!

A person can be in sharpest pain for days, with nurses and doctors being called in to give relief, and then after an operation the patient is soon sleeping quietly and in only a few days is back at work. Getting well is never as distracting as getting sick.

This will help to explain why some forget to give thanks after relief has come! While the man was in pain he was very conscious of his need for a doctor. When the pain is gone he easily and quickly forgets what difference the doctor actually caused. We are all so prone to take good health for granted.

As long as the man was palsied he lay helpless on his bed, dependent upon his friends, and was the center of their concern. As soon as he was healed "immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all." Apparently he at once resumed normal living. There is no further account of his actions – they were now normal.

It was this simple return to the normal routine of activity that so impressed the onlookers. Being healthy is not news, but it is wonderful. Living in the will of God as a Christian need not be sensational, but it is a blessed experience. The first response of a saved soul is simply to do the will of God in the daily round of living.

In what way is the conversion of a soul to God like being healed of a disease? Like being raised from the dead (Romans 6:4, 5)? Like being born (John 3:3-7)? In what ways is it not like being born (John 1:12, 13)? How is the response of the healed man unlike the response of the scribes? Why? Explain Mark 2:12. Why did the response of the healed man cause the multitude to praise God? How is it possible for our actions to cause others to praise God (Matthew 5:16)?

4. What was the response of publicans and sinners?

Mark 2:14, 15

Hearing the call to follow Jesus Christ happens in a moment. This is not a continuous experience lasting for hours, days, months, or years! Knowing about Christ Jesus may grow steadily through years. Thinking about him may continue for hours or days or weeks. Such knowing about him, and thinking about him, must precede for an indefinite period the moment when I hear his call.

I need to know about him to appreciate his call when it comes. I need to understand what he has done, what he does now, and what he may do, in order to respond intelligently when I feel he is calling me.

When we read that "as he passed by, he saw Levi . . . and said unto him, Follow me," we should realize this would probably not be the first time Levi saw him. If such were the case some sort of sudden display of something compelling would have been necessary, and we could expect a description or some reference to it. There is none.

But if we realize that Levi had heard him teach, had perchance seen his miracles (even as Nicodemus – John 3:2), then this simple call is at once meaningful. The One who was calling men to follow him, and was leading them into his service, now calls Levi. "Follow me." There is no argument, no promise, no explanation. The Lord knows the heart of Levi, and knows he needs to be called. There is no hesitation, no fanfare. The record is plain and simple. "And he arose and followed him."

It is very significant that "as Jesus sat at meat in his house," having normal fellowship with Levi, "many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples."

What is "the call" of Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:28)? Is "the call" of Jesus Christ limited to a certain few (John 3:16)? What does "the call" of Jesus Christ teach those who might want to think that all men will be saved? How did Jesus of Nazareth treat the publicans and sinners (Mark 2:15)?

Explain Matthew 21:31, 32. Keeping in mind that Jesus Christ came to reveal God, what does this tell you about the love and grace of God?

5. What was the response of scribes and Pharisees who criticized Jesus?

Mark 2:16, 17

There are some people who feel they know more than the average person and are always ready to criticize and to find fault with others whom they consider to be inferior. Some of these are the educated graduates of our schools. They feel superior in their intellectual ability to have a scholarly opinion of the thoughts and conduct of others. Such were the scribes who were educated in Jewish culture, being acquainted with what scholars in former generations had written.

They criticized Jesus of Nazareth because he did not pay attention to the opinions of men, even educated men. He knew the mind of his Father and delighted to obey his Father's will. Then too he cared about all men – especially the poor and uneducated. He was more concerned that these should know the grace of God than that he should be approved by the scholars. Such an attitude aroused resentment among the scribes.

Also there are some who feel they are superior because they pay attention to many little rules and regulations which they have set up to guide righteous living. They think the aim should be never to break any rule or tradition which their leaders have set up. They become very critical of the outward conduct of others, and do not hesitate to condemn any person who does not conform to their prescribed pattern. They were called Pharisees. Men would call them very religious and this pleased them very much.

They criticized Jesus of Nazareth because he did not insist that his followers should keep all their rules. He himself openly ignored their opinions when in so doing he was obeying his heavenly Father. "The common people heard him gladly," and so the Pharisees envied his popularity with the people. They were particularly bitter about his custom of spending time in company with ordinary people.

An interesting similarity in the Old Testament is the life of David. He gathered about him the outcasts of society, marshaled them into an army and put them to work in the great purposes of God.

What did Jesus mean by, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"?

What does this say to the prominent church member whose family has always been prominent in the church? What does this say to the high school student whose parents are not church members?

How could a person prominent in the church be dangerous to the life of any sinner? How is it possible that a person could be so conscious of what others say that he himself does nothing? In what way could setting up certain wholesome rules and regulations be detrimental to one's own soul?

6. What was the response of the disciples of John?

Mark 2:18-22

Some persons understand the main thing in seeking the blessing of God is to repent and to confess their sins. They do all they can to avoid sinning. By fasting they try to discipline themselves not to sin. They are often unhappy about their own state and seem to feel that lamenting over their failures is actually a virtue. Their whole attitude is one of sadness and sorrow because of sins.

Such persons cannot understand how anyone who is honest can have joy. They are inclined to criticize others who seem to have gladness of heart, because they feel such must be careless or superficial. They know how genuinely sincere they are in their own hearts and it grieves them to see others who profess to believe in Christ actually rejoicing in spirit constantly.

Those do not seem to understand that they are focusing attention upon themselves and are thinking that blessing is to be earned either by their righteous actions or by their repentant confession of sins when they fail. They do not seem to be aware that they are not properly appreciating the saving work of Jesus Christ.

When a believer thinks about Jesus Christ, he is constantly reminded that his sins have been carried away in Christ's death on the cross. He is humbled to know he is a sinner but he is rejoicing to know that Christ Jesus the Saviour has reconciled him to God and is even now interceding on his behalf.

To know that Jesus Christ bore our sins in his own body on the cross, that God has accepted his atoning sacrifice for us and has forgiven us forever, that the Holy Spirit has come into our hearts showing us the things of Christ, that we are now his bride, and that God is our Father, fills the heart with gladness. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

In what way could a sad depressed person constantly remembering his sinfulness be a hindrance to others ever coming to the Lord?

Is it necessarily true that the person who is always rejoicing in the lord is taking his sins and failures too lightly? Why or why not? How would constantly looking at yourself and your sins keep you from growing in faith? In what way is constantly looking at Jesus Christ and what he did for

you like medicine for your soul? Is it true that the person who is so aware of his sins that they are ever before him will never be a victorious Christian? Why?

7. What was the response of the Pharisees who criticized his conduct on the Sabbath?

Mark 2:23-3:6

Circumstances alter cases. When a rule is made it is important to realize that such a rule is to apply only in case everything continues as it was at the time the rule was made. Such a sign as "Employees Only" is meaningful as long as the building is occupied – if everybody moved out, the sign would not mean anything.

The Pharisees made many specific regulations to guide living. Some of their rules were arbitrary and foolish. Jesus of Nazareth defended his disciples when they broke one of these rules.

There is no evidence that Jesus himself broke any of their regulations, but he would not let his disciples be criticized and condemned for something that was not really wrong.

Although the criticism by the Pharisees was doubtless due to envy and jealousy, Jesus did not refer to this in his answer. He took their criticism as if it had been given in good faith and he pointed out an incident in Old Testament times in which conduct similar to that of his disciples took place without an adverse judgment being recorded. But when the Pharisees watched to see his response to the man with the withered hand who was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, Jesus came out openly and challenged them to say whether it was right or wrong to do an act of mercy. His open defiance of them resulted in the Pharisees' definitely deciding to destroy Jesus. The real reason for their hostile reaction was their jealousy and envy. Jesus of Nazareth gained the confidence of the people and the Pharisees were covetous of power – they wanted to be the leaders.

How could you take criticism handed you because of envy and jealousy and benefit by it?

How could a prominent man in a congregation make it difficult for a teacher more popular than himself?

How could one person who is jealous of the success of another try to justify criticism of that other person? Had the Pharisees "manipulated" the Law for their own purposes? Was their interpretation of the Law correct?

Make a Decision

As we have studied this week we have seen how Jesus of Nazareth always took action in every situation he faced. Many times these actions brought criticism. That did not bother him – his sole concern was to do the will of his Father in heaven.

Have you been encouraged to take your stand faithfully for the Lord Jesus Christ, even though you may be criticized and misunderstood for doing so? If so, you can rest assured that God will bless you and give you the strength to stand. Let's go forward in him!

They Couldn't Figure Him Out

Bible reading for this week: John 7:1-36

As Jesus of Nazareth went about teaching and showing the truth of the Kingdom of God, there was much difference of opinion among those who saw and heard him. His own brothers had no confidence in his claims (John 7:5).

The Jews who heard him teach were puzzled because he had not been educated as a scribe (John 7:15). Some who heard him promise the Holy Spirit felt he was the Christ, others felt that his coming out of Galilee disqualified him (John 7:43). Even the soldiers were uncertain that they should arrest him (John 7:46). In the council itself, there was doubt that their plans to destroy him were justified (John 7:51).

1. Why did a great multitude follow Jesus?

Mark 3:7-10

Nothing succeeds like success. Jesus of Nazareth did things. Sick persons were healed. Blind persons were restored to sight. Lame persons could walk. All manner of disease and affliction were cured.

Such things were noised abroad. People came to see. Not only Jews, but from all races of people, a great multitude came unto him. Sickness and trouble are human. Disease and affliction recognize no national barriers or distinction. Blindness is the same for Jew or Gentile. And Jesus healed them all, regardless of who they were.

Anybody that is sick wants to get well. Friends of sick people want them to get well. This is no time for personal feelings or for cheap pride. If there is "balm in Gilead" we want to find it to ease the pain of those who suffer.

Talk can be interesting and attractive. New ideas will be listened to unless we have something more pressing to do. But performance counts most. A lecture on construction of skyscrapers would attract some people, but bulldozers at work excavating to put in foundations will draw the crowd. There is something fascinating about action. People will run to see a fire. Jesus of Nazareth produced results and the multitude crowded around to see.

Not only did people come to see, they came to get well. Missionaries know that the sick will come to be helped. Parents and friends will bring those who suffer. Pain is stronger than prejudice. No matter how opposed a person may be to the message of the missionary – if suffering can be healed, the man who hurts will come.

The great attraction of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that men are actually changed and the sorrowing are truly comforted.

What would be the reaction of your church if the Lord started really working in the young people's group? In the adult classes? In the pioneer and children's classes? How would this affect the entire congregation? Your home? School? community? What would you tell a man who asked you for evidence that the Christian gospel is true? Why? List some means the missionary uses to reach the nationals for Christ.

2. How did unclean spirits respond to Jesus?

Mark 3:11, 12

In our culture nobody wants to accept the reality of demons. Everybody knows the New Testament mentions them, but no one wants to admit they are real. Many different explanations are offered to allow a person to claim complete confidence in the Bible, while privately holding back any acceptance of the reality of evil spirits. The popular view is to doubt the reality of anything that does not consist of matter

Many do not realize that this is the frame of mind that doubts the reality of God. Some want to say they believe in God but they cannot accept the idea that he is a person. These also reject the truth that the Holy Spirit is a person. They do not believe in a personal devil. Neither do they accept the truth about angels. And for them there is no such place as heaven.

This whole mental set is not new in the history of the world. Such was the mind of the Sadducees in the days of Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 22:23). But it is definitely contrary to the Bible. Jesus of Nazareth lifted up his eyes and talked to his heavenly Father. A voice from heaven was heard to say, "This is my beloved Son." Gabriel brought a message to Mary. And Jesus of Nazareth cast out demons who knew him and obeyed him.

Although it is popular to deny the reality of demons, many reliable persons admit their existence. Anybody reading the New Testament knows that this is what the record says. Many missionaries tell of experiences in which they were convinced of the reality of evil spirits. Some doctors do not hesitate to testify as to their own conviction that demons do exist and can possess persons to influence their actions.

What does the Bible teach about God (John 4:24)? Angels (Matthew 28:5)? Demons (Luke 11:20)? Heaven (Matthew 6:9)? Hell (Matthew 23:33)? The Holy Spirit (John 16:13)?

What effect could a youth worker, who did not believe these things, have on a young person's faith? How could a science professor, who did not believe in the "supernatural," affect the faith of a young girl from humble surroundings, whose parents though uneducated really believed in God? What effect would a pastor have on his congregation if he said he believed the Bible to be God's Word, but in his sermons he tried to explain away the reality of the Holy Spirit? What does II Timothy 3:16, 17 mean to you?

3. How were the apostles chosen?

Mark 3:13-19

The word "disciple" means pupil. It is used to refer to a person who is being "disciplined" by a master, a teacher. When anyone accepts Jesus Christ as his master and listens to learn from him, such a one is a "disciple."

The word "apostle" means agent. It is used to refer to a person who has been given an assignment to perform, a mission to accomplish by someone who is Lord. When anyone accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and moves to obey him as he directs, such a one is an "apostle."

Jesus of Nazareth had many disciples, both men and women. Not all remained as his disciples. Some went back and walked no more with him. Out of his many disciples Jesus called twelve to be pre-eminently his apostles.

In the account given by Mark there is no clue as to why he chose the twelve. There is no description of their personalities or of their abilities. Their names are given to establish their identity, but nothing is said to indicate any basis for their selection. It is simply written that he "callected unto him whom he would: and they came unto him."

It is the glory of the gospel that "whosoever will" may come. "God is no respecter of persons." Apparently even in service anybody may be called. Since serving God will be done by the power of God,

it seems to be of no matter who or what a man may be. God will enable him whoever he is.

Something is indicated by the further record that Jesus called them to "be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal." Apparently they would not serve him in their own ability or strength, but as they were enabled by him.

What is meant by: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD" (Zechariah 4:6)?

Would you say that Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus Christ was a disciple or an apostle? Why? Since the accomplishments of an apostle (agent) do not depend upon his cultural training and upbringing, on what do they seem to depend? Read I Corinthians 1:26, 27 in conjunction with Luke 1:37, and Mark 10:27. What could this mean to you if you were wealthy, a scholar, poor, or uneducated? Does this necessarily mean that a rich man could not be a real Christian?

4. What did the friends of Jesus think of his conduct?

Mark 3:20, 21

Many of the things that happened with Jesus of Nazareth were actually unbelievable. He was so much more than anyone knew, that things seemed too amazing to be true. People came to him for help in such numbers and stayed so long it was not possible for them to get food to eat. This alarmed his friends who felt they must try to help him out of what was becoming an impossible situation.

They meant well, but they were wrong. Even though they were his friends they did not realize the truth about him.

Sometimes when a person accepts Christ Jesus as Saviour and begins to testify that he is now a child of God, there are well-meaning friends and loved ones who think he is letting his emotions and his imagination carry him beyond reality. They do not mean to do any harm, and they know how sincerely they want to help, so they feel they must interfere and save him from too much enthusiasm. But they are wrong. Their well-meaning interest and concern is not enough. Unless they have faith in God themselves, they cannot possibly understand the actions of a real believer.

It is strange how easy it is to accuse a believer of being "beside himself." Parents and friends are often deeply disturbed when a young Christian volunteers to go to the mission field. Some friends are troubled when a Christian no longer shares in worldly amusements.

How did Jesus of Nazareth answer his friends when they wanted to protect him from over-excitement and overwork? In what way could a well-meaning friend cause one's faith to become weak? How could concerned parents cool off a teenager's enthusiasm to be completely yielded to Jesus Christ? What could be the effect on a young Christian of a pastor who is in the ministry for selfish reasons? Read I Corinthians 2:11. What does this verse mean to you? How would you answer criticism of your parents, family, and friends that you were "too enthusiastic for the things of Christ"? How would you get strength to overcome such criticism? Cite Scripture to support your answer.

5. How did the scribes explain Jesus' power over demons?

Mark 3:22-30

Good results are strong evidence of the validity of a message. Even when Peter and John were arrested for preaching, it was because they saw "the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." And so it has been with the gospel everywhere – the results in changed lives through conversion have great power.

Opponents of the gospel try to discredit the results which are reported. Other explanations of what has happened are offered so that there should be some doubt that these events are the work of God. The results cannot be denied, but the explanation can give some other reason than the direct power of God.

When Jesus cast out demons he claimed it was by the power of God. He claimed that his power over demons came as a result of his power over Satan himself. He said this was evidence that the kingdom of God was being demonstrated before them (Matthew 12:28).

But the scribes gave a different explanation. They could not deny what had happened, but they claimed he did this because he was in league with Satan.

After Jesus argued to show the foolishness of their insinuation, he warned that any attempt to discredit the operation of the Holy Spirit in such cases of deliverance was actually blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This he said was a most serious offense since any person doing this would never have forgiveness. John calls this the unpardonable sin.

It was because they accused him of working in cooperation with Satan when he was actually delivering souls from the power of Satan, that he warned them so gravely.

How is the explanation of spiritual experience as being entirely a psychological matter similar to the explanation given by the scribes of miracles performed by Jesus of Nazareth?

Should such natural explanation of spiritual experience be condemned in the same way as the ideas given by the scribes? How could such explanation be seen as "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit"? How could the conversion of a drunkard in a city mission be understood as a work of God through his Holy Spirit? How could such an experience be explained as a natural phenomenon without referring to the power of God? How could a young doctor's volunteering to go as a missionary be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit? How could this very event be explained on human, natural or personal grounds?

6. How did Jesus' mother and brethren feel about his conduct?

Mark 3:31-33

Generally speaking, no one cares as much about one's conduct as one's own family. People who belong to you want to see you get along well. They want to feel proud about your actions and hope you will be wise and successful. If you should seem to be doing something foolish, it would be your own family that would try to guide you in a better way.

When a person does things because he believes God and his promises, other people do not always understand. Sometimes your own people try to persuade you to do differently. They think you go to church too often during the week, that you read your Bible too much, that you spend too much time praying. They really want to help you without always realizing that they are actually assuming they know what you should do better than you do.

Often when a young person feels led to volunteer for the ministry or for the mission field, such members of the family will strongly urge that this is too much – it is not necessary to make such sacrifice.

When Jesus' mother and brethren came to take him away from the people who gathered to hear him, he would not listen to their call (Matthew 12:46-48).

Relationship with God is more important than any family ties on earth. Just as the soul is more important than the body, and heaven is more important than earth, so is the will of God more important than the opinions of our loved ones.

What are some actions a young Christian might do which would seem unreasonable or even unbalanced to his own family? If a medical student upon graduation volunteered to go to the mission field, what arguments could his family propose in order to change his mind? What are some arguments put forth to claim that a Christian should feel free to marry anybody regardless of spir-

itual conditions?

What are some ideas set forth to claim that it is unreasonable and even unwise to refuse to take part in "worldly amusement"?

If a college student refuses to drink alcoholic beverages, what reasoning might some friends use to try to convince him that he is wrong?

7. How did Jesus feel about those who obeyed God?

Mark 3:34, 35

"Ye must be born again." This was emphasized by Jesus of Nazareth in his explanation of eternal life to Nicodemus. Paul wrote: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." They are not only new, they are different. Being born again does not mean a second chance to do the same things – it is not a rerun of my life to give me a chance to do better. It means being born a different kind of person.

John wrote, "Now are we the sons of God," even if the world does not recognize this in us. This means many things are to be seen differently. Jesus of Nazareth showed in himself some of these differences. When he was a boy twelve years old he stayed behind in the temple to be "about my father's business" (Luke 2:49). Later when he began his public ministry he made it clear that he counted as brother and sister and mother "whosoever shall do the will of God."

This is what is involved in being "crucified with Christ." The Christian believer no longer sees himself as a citizen of this world. Heaven is his home. A Christian is a sojourner, a tourist, a stranger, a pilgrim, a passer-through.

How might obeying God affect the use of money? The use of leisure time? Social conduct? conversation? One's goals in life? One's outlook in politics? One's outlook in international affairs? One's family life? One's choice of a spouse?

Make a Decision

"For the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Not any of us feel good when our actions are questioned; this Jesus of Nazareth had to face on every side – even his family and close friends were among those who couldn't figure him out. The reason for this was that they didn't "know him." They lived with him and saw him work, yet they didn't "know him." Are you willing to face criticism and misunderstanding for him? If so, he will strengthen you in your every trial for him.

He Helped Them to See

Bible reading for this week: Matthew 13:1-23

Jesus of Nazareth came to men to show them the truth of God's salvation. Some works of God are not involved with the action of men. Certain natural processes and events do not in any way depend upon the behavior of man. But the saving of the soul requires faith to receive the grace of God; and faith requires some knowledge and some understanding of the promises of God.

Since God is invisible he must reveal his will to man in such a way that man can understand. To communicate truth to a person who understands only Chinese, the teacher must speak Chinese so that the pupil can understand. In speaking to people who understood only natural things. Jesus of Nazareth used parables which referred to these things.

1. Why can parables be so helpful in teaching?

Romans 1:19, 20

Teaching is a process in which one person helps another person learn something. Usually the teacher knows something the pupil does not know, but which he can learn. The task of the teacher is to communicate to the pupil's mind what is unknown to the pupil so that it may then be known.

A common means of communication is language. By using words and other artifacts known to the pupil, the teacher so presents what he wants the pupil to come to know, that the pupil can grasp the idea and thus know what was before unknown to him. This is the well-known principle of proceeding from the known to the unknown.

If I wanted to teach a Chinese boy I would need to speak Chinese. If I wanted to teach a Frenchman I would speak French. It is essential that I present what I want him to learn in language he knows. It is common practice to use illustrations to convey truth. When Paul wanted to teach the Galatians that certain results would follow certain human conduct, he used an illustration from plant life that they all knew: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Jesus of Nazareth wanted to teach men principles that would prevail in matters pertaining to the Kingdom of God. He used parables. He made up a simple story of everyday experience that was commonly understood and used it to convey what was spiritually true, but was invisible by its very nature. The parable of the sower and the seed was easily understood, and by using it Jesus showed that proclaiming the gospel is not enough to save souls: the proclamation must be received and obeyed by the hearer.

How could a preacher's ministry be limited if he tried to impress people with high-sounding words and difficult phrases? What is necessary for a teacher of music to know if he plans to teach music? Write out I Corinthians 14:9. What does that verse mean? If a professor of English used only eloquent oratory in class would his students ever learn English? Why or why not? Is sound doctrine and faithful preaching of the gospel all that is necessary for a soul to be saved? Explain.

2. Why did Jesus use parables in teaching about the Kingdom?

Matthew 13:10-17

"There's none so blind, as them that won't see." This is a homely folk saying with much profound

truth. It is possible to close the mind to anything coming from some certain source, so completely that nothing from that Source will even be heard. Many times a boy who does not want to leave the ball game does not hear his dad calling him. Many a girl who hates washing dishes cannot/does not hear her mother calling her to the task. This is a profound fact in spiritual experience.

Many people have already made up their minds about anything that deals with religion. They won't listen. They will not attend to anything that may be said, if it "smacks" of religion. They stay away from the church not because of the sermon (actually they haven't heard the sermon!) but because it deals with religion and they have already agreed with themselves that they will not listen. There are many excuses, but such really do not count. The mind is closed, the heart is turned away. The answer is "no" before the message is ever spoken.

But such people might listen to other things. Natural events, personal experience, or special happenings can be very interesting and would be listened to. For this reason a wise teacher will begin his message by telling of something in business, in work, in history or in sports. The hearer can understand and will listen because of natural interest. When the point has been made it is a simple matter to apply it in spiritual realities before the mind can be turned away.

Why did Jesus use such a phrase as "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"? In what way could a doctor witness to someone about faith in Jesus Christ, using his professional experience?

How could a football player naturally get the attention of high school boys? How could a successful salesman arouse the interest of a good moral person in the gospel if that person did not feel he needed a Saviour? What are some illustrations a grocery store clerk could use to explain how a person could accept the gospel of Jesus Christ? How could a housewife in humble circumstances explain to her socialite friend the joy of being a Christian?

3. What does the parable of the soils actually teach about the gospel?

Mark 4:3-9

No man can become a Christian out of himself. It is true that wheat grows out of the ground, and all the chemical ingredients found in the wheat came out of the soil, the air, and the rain. But the soil, air and rain with sunlight will alone never produce wheat! It is true that man's behavior is psychological in operation and it can be described and understood in sociological principles, but all psychological processes and sociological procedures will never produce a Christian. A survey of human history and an examination of human affairs will show plainly that no Christian ever materialized where the gospel had not been preached!

Every element in an oak tree can be traced to the soil of that hillside, but that soil will never produce an oak. And why does this ground have oak trees on it, whereas over there are apple trees? It is the same soil under the same conditions!

It is the acorn that causes the oak! It is the bean that causes beans! And it is the gospel that produces Christians. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The human mind and heart must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Bible, before the soul can believe on Jesus Christ and be saved (Romans 10:14).

Just as the sower casts the seed far and wide everywhere, so the gospel is to be preached to all men. It is always the Word of God and it could save anybody, and would save anybody who would accept it, but it will actually work only where it is received and obeyed.

If a person wanted to have a crop of beans in his garden what would be absolutely necessary that he do? If a person wanted to lead another to become a Christian what would be absolutely necessary that he do? How could the effect of a strong lesson in a Sunday School class be removed from a pupil's mind when the class was dismissed? What happens when a person who decides he wants

to be a Christian stops coming to church or reading his Bible within two weeks? How could it happen that a person who really wants to begin living the Christian life never finds the right time to get started? What sort of things could cause a Christian to neglect his spiritual life?

4. What does this parable teach about the effectiveness of preaching?

Mark 4:15-20

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." These are the words of Paul who preached the gospel so widely and so effectively, that it was said of the early Christians that they "turned the world upside down." Yet this parable shows that preaching does have limitations as to its effectiveness, in the different results that followed different types of reception by the hearers.

Preaching does get the gospel to all kinds of people. Apparently the same procedure is involved whether there are good results or none. It would seem the preacher himself does not aim his preaching at only one group – it is more a case of whosoever hears can listen if he will.

But the preacher cannot force acceptance of his message. If those who hear pay no attention to what they hear and do not try to understand it, Satan can take the gospel message out of the mind without leaving any trace of it (Mark 4:15). It is a sobering thought to realize that the devil does not want any soul to listen to or understand the gospel.

The preacher cannot force the hearer to be sincere in response. Any person can seem to accept the preaching without really meaning it! If a person professes to believe the message and then soon turns away, this need not be any fault of the preaching (Mark 4:16, 17).

There is no way a preacher can prevent thoughts of cares and pleasures taking over the consciousness of those who really hear and understand the gospel. The message may be truly received and appreciated, yet because of so many other things coming in to claim attention, it may never bear fruit (Mark 4:18, 19).

However, the same preaching may bring the gospel to a willing heart and result in much blessing (Mark 4:20).

How does the parable of the sower and the seed illustrate the preaching of the gospel? What was the meaning of the sower? The seed? The soil by the wayside? The soil that was stony ground? The soil that had thorns? The soil that turned out to be good ground? Does the preaching of the gospel make all the difference? What does the effectiveness of preaching actually depend upon? How can you see the meaning of John 1:12 in this parable?

5. How did Jesus emphasize the importance of heeding the message?

Mark 4:21-25

Every day a man hears many different ideas as to what he could and should do. Some suggestions are useless, some are evil, some are good; so that a man must judge which he will take and which he will reject.

Every idea causes certain results. A man should look to see what happens when the idea is actually put in practice. If there were no results, the idea is probably useless. If there are bad results, it is obviously evil, and should be avoided.

It is very important that a man should be careful in whatever he chooses to do. I can expect to receive in results exactly according to what I choose in making my decision. If I choose that which is good, more good will follow, and I will be more and more pleasing to God. If I choose that which is evil, more evil will follow, and I will be more and more unfortunate.

This is actually the law of the harvest: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7), and Paul makes it the basis of a dire warning and also of a gracious promise. It is this simple but profound truth that leads many clear-thinking persons to accept Jesus Christ.

But there is another truth which seems even more sobering. If a soul does not choose the good way which is open and obvious because of its clear path to good results, then that soul will not only be without the good results he could have had, but he will actually lose the opportunity which he did not take. In this way he actually loses something which he had just because he does not choose the good which was right before him. "Light not followed becomes darkness."

How could a sick person stay sick even though he had been given medicine that would cure him? In what way is Esau's selling of his birthright like the person who has heard clearly the call of God, but does nothing about it (Genesis 25:29-34)? What warning can you see in this statement: "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3)? In what way was the preaching of Noah similar to the preaching of the gospel? How does the Bible teaching of the importance of preaching contradict the popular notion that "all men are saved"? What responsibility does the hearer have when the gospel is preached? Write out Isaiah 55:6. What would this verse say to you as you listened to preaching?

6. How did Jesus teach God's part in the effectiveness of preaching?

Mark 4:26-29

Anyone who has ever planted a garden will remember how wonderful it is to note that plants grow day and night, even when they are not being watched. I can remember what a thrill it was to come back even in two days time and see the evidence that while I was gone and was busy elsewhere, the beans had grown as though I had nothing to do with them.

Many times a person has the delightful surprise of seeing a bud form where there had been no sign only a short time before. Plants growing do not need to be led or pushed. Even so it is with the whole matter of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There must be seed put into the ground or there never will be any beans in the garden. But when once the seed is put in the ground, it is "God that giveth the increase." Just as God makes wheat grow, so God produces faith in the heart. It is not necessary to go through any special ritual of asking God to cause the wheat to grow, mature and ripen. This God will do. And it is even so with the gospel. If the Word of God is preached, God will give the increase.

There is a process of growth involved which takes time. The mature plant with the fruit does not appear immediately, but it will come eventually. There are stages of growth with the grain in the field, and it is even so with the faith of a soul. But the eventual result of faith can be expected with confidence.

What could give a Sunday School teacher confidence to expect results from his teaching? Will a Sunday School teacher always be successful in bringing each student to a saving faith? What actually is the teacher's part in bringing a soul to God? What is God's part? Explain Acts 3:6 as an insight into Sunday School teaching. Does God ever force anyone to receive his message of salvation? What does Luke 13:34 teach about this? Explain John 3:16.

7. How did Jesus teach the remarkable growth of response to the gospel?

Mark 4:30-32

The little acorn can be the cause of the mighty oak tree! We are often dismayed because we have so little opportunity to teach the gospel. There is so much in the Bible and it is so hard to get anybody to

listen to any of it. It is easy to be discouraged with the thought we can never get people to know what is in the Bible.

But Jesus of Nazareth taught that only a very little truth can lead to great results. He pointed out that a mustard seed is very small. But the mustard plant, to which he was referring was the largest of the herbs in that country. This was his illustration of the great truth that great results in faith and in experience can follow the hearing and receiving of only a little truth of the gospel. This should encourage parents who may despair because their children did not learn much Scripture and perhaps could never recite the catechism. It would have been helpful, of course, if the children could have learned more, but so much can follow from so little that parents can take courage if the children learned only some of the gospel. Just so with Sunday School and with church services. There is no limit to what can develop from only a very meager grasp of the gospel.

Jesus went on to say that such growth could develop to the point where others could be benefited by the results. This will forever be real encouragement to all who preach and teach the gospel.

Make a Decision

Salvation is the work of God in and by Jesus Christ, his Son. God has made all the necessary provisions. In this week's study we have seen how the Lord Jesus Christ emphasized the necessity of heeding his call of salvation in order to benefit from God's provision of salvation and blessing.

Have you heeded the call of God for salvation and service for him? God has promised great blessing to those who forsake all to follow him. His call is not grievous but it is joyous.

As believers in Christ what part would the following have in our spiritual growth in Christ? Bible reading. Prayer. Public worship. Tithing. Could we ever hope to grow spiritually if we did none of these? Why or why not?

What effect does one's assurance that he does belong to God have on his spiritual growth? On victory over sin? On power in witnessing? Can anyone here and now know for sure that he does belong to God (I John 5:13)? What function does the Holy Spirit have in a believer's growth in Christ (John 16:13, 14)?

What is your greatest spiritual need? What could you be doing about it?

He Could Do Anything

Bible reading for this week: Luke 8:22-56

Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God incarnate in human form. He came to save sinners by dying for them and being raised from the dead. In order to be saved the sinner must believe in him as the Son of God with power to forgive and to raise from the dead. That the sinner might be convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, Jesus performed certain miracles to show the power of God at his disposal (Luke 5:24).

In doing these mighty works, Jesus manifested the power of God over the processes of nature, the demons, death and disease (John 3:2). The very fact that he performed these works of wonder in the presence of men showed the purpose to beget faith in himself as the Son of God.

1. What did the healing of the Gadarene show?

Mark 5:1-20

Many things we could never believe to be true are shown to us in actual events. Though I may feel sure "that will never happen to me," when it does happen I know it is real. So it is with much that is in the gospel.

There is much we do not know. The whole spiritual world is invisible, and some make the big error of thinking it is not real. This is why reading and studying the Bible is so important.

Nobody could ever imagine the things revealed in Mark's account of what happened to the Gadarene demoniac. This man was actually possessed by real demons. The man could not control his own actions. Though he was actually hurting himself no other human being could help him.

But when he saw Jesus of Nazareth the demons recognized Jesus at once as their Judge who would in time destroy them. When they requested permission to enter the swine, and Jesus granted this, the legion of demons entered the swine and thus acted in self-destructive fashion.

It is interesting to note that the swine acted to their own hurt, just as the poor man had done while dwelling among the tombs.

Such an account leaves no proper question in a reader's mind as to the reality of demons, the helplessness of the person who is under their power, the fact that the demons know who the Son of God is and that they are subject to him. There is no doubt that the Son of God breaks the power of Satan and of his demons, and that Christ can and will deliver souls who are now under the control of demons.

List three things that are involved in your daily life, the operation of which you understand from a scientific point of view. list three things that occur in your daily life that you know are real but the operation of which you cannot understand. Can an event be real even if you can't explain it? What does this story reveal about the power of Jesus Christ? What can you see about the power of Christ as compared to the power of Satan? What assurance does this give about gospel preaching (Acts 26:18)?

2. What different responses occurred to the display of power?

Mark 5:1-20

"A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still." Again and again this truth is illustrated in spiritual experience. Sometimes a man will honestly think that if he just knew for sure a certain promise would be carried out, he would certainly accept it for himself; when actually the real reason he does not accept is not that he is uncertain, but that he is unwilling. A man will say the reason he does not accept the Bible is that he cannot be sure it is true, when actually the real reason is that he does not want to do what he knows well enough that the Bible would teach him to do.

The delivering of the Gadarene from the control of the demons was openly known to the people in the city, but this did not cause them to accept Christ! Despite the obvious blessing of his presence and his power, the people asked him to go away. God's holiness blinded them because they did not follow it. Light not followed becomes darkness.

However, the man who had actually been delivered, and who thus knew from personal experience the benefit and the blessing of the grace of God, wanted to stay with Jesus wherever he went!

In the same congregation, in the same Sunday School class, even in the same family there will be some who despite all demonstration simply do not want to walk with Christ; and there will be some who want to be with him as much as possible. It is not whether a soul knows enough, but whether that soul really wants the Lord.

In what way was the response of the people of the city like people who had witnessed a great revival in a church, city or country? How could a person who had just come to faith make his unbelieving friends uncomfortable (Mark 5:15)? What may happen with former friends if a person accepted Christ and became a changed person?

Write out Acts 1:8. Where does witnessing begin? What is the one commission the lord has given to his disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)? Many people have said, "If I had been living when Jesus of Nazareth was here I would have really believed." According to our lesson is that necessarily true? Why?

3. What did the stilling of the storm demonstrate?

Mark 4:35-39

The processes and understood to be beyond the control of man. Storms, earthquakes, volcanoes, and such are called "acts of God." Through science man has learned much about natural processes, and by his engineering ability has learned how to manipulate natural forces to improve his lot and fortune. But the actual course of natural processes seems to be outside of man's control.

The storm which arose while Jesus and his disciples were in a boat crossing the sea was so violent that the boat was in danger of being swamped by the high waves. The disciples could not understand how Jesus could sleep through such turbulence, and they awakened him so that he might face the danger with them.

There is a suggestion here that they may have expected he might help them, and yet their astonishment at his demonstration of control over natural elements would indicate they had not expected such direct action on his part.

In any case they were amazed that he could control the wind and the sea in such direct fashion by the exercise of his will. They were deeply stirred even as they realized that he had power far beyond anything they had ever seen in any man.

This incident shows that all natural processes and events are actually occurring in the will of God. The fact that natural processes are so regular and so consistent is a manifestation of the ways of God. He

is constant and faithful and keeps all nature as regular as it is for the welfare of man. In order to show that such processes are really in his will, he demonstrated how he could change their course at his will. The fact that such control was within the power of Jesus of Nazareth would show beyond any reasonable doubt that he was really "the Son of God."

How does this incident suggest experiences in human life? In what way was this storm an illustration of the whole life of a soul? What does this story teach about praying? How did this incident show that Jesus of Nazareth was authentic in his claims? What does this story imply as to how a soul might have peace? How could anyone today apply the lessons of this incident to his own life? Should a believer today expect anything like this in his daily affairs?

4. What did the healing of the woman teach?

Mark 5:24-34

Often a person is brought to Christ Jesus by some friend or loved one who cares and wants to help. But some come to the Saviour because of their own sense of need, and what they have heard of the gospel. So it was with the leper who came to say, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The Lord's response was direct: "I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

Mark tells of the woman who "had an issue of blood twelve years." This person was aware of her inner condition, her need. She had vainly sought relief. Now she had heard of Jesus of Nazareth and at once felt here was her opportunity. She felt she would only need to touch the hem of his garment to receive the help she needed.

Apparently this woman was timid and humble. But her condition made her desperate. Despite her fears and reluctance to be noticed, she made it a point to come close enough to Jesus in the crowd to be able to touch his cloak.

"And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague" (Mark 5:29). What a wonderful promise to anyone who knows his or her own inner condition to be like an incurable disease! Just to come to the Lord by one's own heartfelt faith and reach for him!

Such blessing may come to a person in the privacy of his own inner consciousness, but an open confession is important. Jesus called for open public testimony. "Who touched me?" Humbly and fearfully the healed woman gave her public witness to his healing power. Jesus then spoke words of comfort and assurance.

What a glorious opportunity for anyone of us who feels inner sickness!

What made the condition of the woman so pathetic? How could her condition remind you of an unsaved person? What showed the strength of her faith?

What made the touch of the woman different from that of others in the crowd? What can you learn from the response of Jesus to her touch? What does this incident teach about spiritual experience in a congregation? What promise can be given to anyone who needs help? How important is open public confession of blessing received from Christ Jesus?

5. What did the raising of Jairus' daughter show?

Mark 5:21-43

When sickness comes to a loved one, other members of the family are ready humbly to seek help from anyone regardless of public opinion. Jesus of Nazareth was not favored by the Jewish leaders, but when Jairus' little girl was lying at the point of death, he came to Jesus to ask for his help.

No questions were asked, and no conditions were set up when the father came asking for help. He simply acknowledged how much they needed help. Jesus responded immediately, going promptly to the bedside of the one who was sick.

Members of Jairus' own household would have prevented this work of grace from ever happening by acting on conclusions that seemed so clear to them. The little girl had died, and so the time was past when anyone could help her. There was no need to go through with the request for help.

Jesus himself took the initiative and guided matters along so that the father's first intention should be carried out. He had come to Jesus for help and Jesus was ready and able to help far beyond what anyone could expect. He was especially careful to avoid any sort of dramatic circumstances. He arranged to have present only those who were vitally concerned.

Apparently Jesus did not want either popularity or notoriety, which the crowd could have given him. He wanted conviction and this is grounded in personal, private, even secret, dealings between the soul and God.

Though this was a remarkable work of power, Jesus did not want it to be talked about by a curious crowd. Apparently he wanted the girl also to accept this and immediately resume her normal life. As soon as she had been raised, he "commanded that something should be given her to eat."

What does this miracle tell us about the power of God? About his readiness to hear us when we pray? About death? Is there ever a hopeless case as far as God is concerned? What encouragement could this lesson give a mother who had a wayward son or daughter? A husband whose wife has nothing to do with the things of God? A teen-ager who has unbelieving parents?

6. What was the form of unbelief of Jesus' neighbors?

Mark 6:1-3

Many seem to think the issue of faith is simply a matter of the accuracy of the records or the reliability of the data recorded. Actually such is not the key problem of faith. Data is either true or false; records are either accurate or unreliable – but faith involves a question of obedient response to a call that offers a promise.

In Christ, God offers a way to escape condemnation and to receive eternal life. There is involved a repentant obedience to his call to come confessing sins and to receive Christ Jesus as Saviour and Lord. But this is based on knowing Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God and accepting him as Saviour and Lord.

His neighbors had known him as a man and they were so impressed with his human aspect that they could not and would not think of him as the Son of God.

In view of the miracles he had done, this unbelief on their part was an amazement to him (Mark 6:6). They could see him as a good man, but they could not see that he was actually the Son of God in human form.

It is very significant that the only works recorded as done by Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels are all supernatural in form. Even today men try to teach about Jesus by telling of his actions as a carpenter, or as a young Jew. The Bible does not do this, and in view of the results here in his own neighborhood we should be warned against thinking of him only as a man!

What is the one incident in the life of Jesus as a boy that is reported in the Bible (Luke 2:40-52)? How important for faith do you think the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth actually seems to be? Why do you think this? On the basis of Mark 6:1-3, how should one evaluate a course in Bible study that accents psychological and sociological factors? What may one expect from a missions program that seeks to promote the gospel by dealing with general social and economic problems of the country? How does Mark 6:1-3 help in understanding the words of Jesus to Pilate as reported

in John 18:36? What spiritual fruit could you expect from the activities of any person who really believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a good man and no more?

7. What is the tragic result of unbelief?

Mark 6:4-6

Unbelief is not simply a matter of doubting that Jesus of Nazareth lived in Galilee and in Judea, or that he died on a cross at Calvary. Basic to unbelief is the rejection of the testimony that he was the Son of God, equal to the Father, even while here in human form. To think of him only as a man, even a good man, is the kind of unbelief that prevailed among his neighbors.

They were so impressed because they knew his mother, brothers and sisters, and knew that he had lived in their midst, that they could not and would not concede that he was anything more than a man.

The tragic result was that "he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." This is a sober warning as to the result we can expect whenever his humanity is emphasized to the point where he is thought of as only a man.

If salvation were by the works of men, then Jesus of Nazareth could serve as an example we should try to follow. But salvation is the work of God, so that the believer is reconciled to God by the death of the Son of God, is born again by the grace of God, is raised into resurrection life by the power of God as he raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.

If the whole Christian education program in a specific church uniformly presented Jesus Christ as a very good man, but only a man, what results could one look for in individual members of the church? If Jesus Christ is presented as being only a man what would the message urge upon the hearer? If Jesus Christ is presented as the Son of God in a human body, what could the message promise to the hearer? Is it possible to believe all the biographical facts in the gospel about Jesus of Nazareth and yet not be saved? What must I believe in addition to the fact of Christ's death if I am to be saved (Romans 10:9)?

What does it actually mean to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Make a Decision

All the promises in the Bible of the gospel in Christ Jesus are valid and true for you according to your faith. If you believe these things, they are operative in you. Believing them does not make them true; they are true whether you believe or not. But believing makes them operative. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." This means that the marvelous things promised in the Word of God are possible to him that believeth. Are you claiming any of his promises for yourself?

He Got Them Ready to Go and to Do

Bible reading for this week: Matthew 10:1-23

Jesus of Nazareth came to do the will of his Father in saving the people of God. He came in the form of a servant and was found in fashion as a man, having taken "on him the seed of Abraham" that "through death he might... deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-16). Thus he came to Israel as their promised Messiah.

The people of Israel had to exercise faith that they might be saved. They needed to believe in Jesus as the Christ. That they might actually see the demonstration of his credentials as the promised Messiah, he sent his disciples through the land with power to act in his name.

1. Jesus commissions the apostles

Mark 6:7-11

A disciple is a pupil who comes to some teacher to be instructed – that he may learn. An apostle is an agent who acts to carry on the work of his master. Jesus of Nazareth attracted disciples at times in large numbers. Of these it was said on one occasion, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

From among his disciples Jesus chose twelve who were to represent him in performing tasks in his name. These were known as the apostles. They were given special training, special powers and special instructions for the special tasks they would do (Mark 3:14, 15). In Matthew 10:1 they were called "disciples" when he called them to him, but in verse 2 they are called "apostles" when he sent them forth to serve.

Apparently this office was one that could be dropped (Acts 1:25). Just why there were twelve apostles with Christ Jesus has not been revealed, but that there were other apostles is clear from other Scriptures (I Corinthians 9:1, 5; 12:28; Ephesians 4:11).

Certain characteristics could be recognized as belonging to an apostle (II Corinthians 12:12). There were men in the early church who were "false apostles" (II Corinthians 11:13), and the Christians who were alert would expose such by testing their integrity (Revelation 2:2). Yet the false apostles were in position to do much harm because they imitated the true representatives of Christ (II Corinthians 11:3-15). Even the apostles had the unhappy necessity of warning the Christians against such "deceitful workers" (II Peter 2; II John 1:10, 11).

Paul always understood himself to be an apostle even though he had not followed Jesus of Nazareth as the twelve did (Acts 1:21, 22). When is a person a disciple? An apostle (II Corinthians 12:12)? What would be some of the characteristics of false apostles (II Corinthians 11:13; II Peter 2)? What proves that they are imitation (Jude 1:12, 13)? How could you tell the difference between a "rose" growing in a garden and one made from plastic? Why are false apostles so dangerous? In what sense is a minister today like an apostle? What are some of the dangers of having church members who do not really believe the Bible? List some of the characteristics one could expect to see in a church worker who is a true believer.

2. Herod's response to the testimony of Jesus

Mark 6:14-20

Herod the King had been greatly impressed by John the Baptist. Even though Herod was an evil man, he respected John and responded in many ways to his preaching.

John had been frankly honest with Herod and openly accused him of sin in taking his brother's wife as his own. This made Herodias angry and she would have killed John if she had been able. Herod had put John in prison, perhaps as we would say, in "protective custody." Herod was snared into putting John to death, which he undoubtedly had not wanted to do.

When the fame of Jesus of Nazareth was spread around, Herod heard it and immediately said this was John the Baptist risen from the dead. This fact raises many ideas about what was thought about John the Baptist in those days.

It is possible that John the Baptist worked miracles also, which are not reported in the New Testament. Herod either knew that John had done such, or he felt that any man raised from the dead could do such.

When some said Jesus was Elijah risen from the dead, and others said he was one of the prophets, it is apparent that the prophets were known for their miracle working. When Herod insisted it was John the Baptist it would perhaps appear that Herod esteemed John the greatest of the prophets – greater than Elijah.

It is quite possible that Herod was conscience-stricken about what he had done to John the Baptist and so felt this apparition of John was something sent to trouble him.

What are some of the ways in which people can persecute a Christian who is an outspoken witness for Jesus Christ? How can a family be persecuted in a neighborhood because they are outspoken in their testimony as Christians?

What should be your attitude if it falls to your lot to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41)? What should your prayer be (Acts 4:29)? If you were / are suffering because you are a Christian, what are some of the thoughts you would want to cherish (I Peter 4:16-19)? Can a person who is suffering because of his testimony about Jesus Christ be confident that the Lord will be with him in his trials (II Timothy 4:16, 17)?

3. The apostles' report to the Lord

Mark 6:30-32

A person likes to tell a friend what is happening in his affairs. A very important part of success is the joy of telling how it actually came to pass. One of the happy benefits of being married is the privilege of hearing firsthand the real story of what has happened to the other.

In the business world much of the success of any enterprise depends upon the salesmen who distribute the product. These agents travel far and wide representing their company, selling, getting orders, and signing contracts. A very common sight is to see a traveling salesman filling out his report which must be sent regularly to his home office. Sometimes it is necessary for him to interrupt his planned trip that he might go back to headquarters for more complete instructions.

This arrangement is carefully followed in military action. When orders are given, action is taken, and reports are sent immediately to field headquarters. It is essential in the direction of a campaign that a commander know what has happened at every sector on the front.

Partners keep each other informed as to what each has done, is facing, and plans to do. Only in this way can the mutual purpose be achieved, and the common goal reached.

Children bring report cards from school. Even universities send reports to parents as to the grades

achieved by students during the past semester.

When Jesus sent out his apostles to do what he had instructed them to do, they came back to him to report what had happened. In this way they would evaluate their own experiences, and he could explain more fully the real meaning of his message.

What is the value of a Christian testifying to blessing received by him? How can such reporting help him in his future tasks? What is to be learned about serving the Lord by the fact that Jesus of Nazareth told his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest"? In what other ways could they rest besides the physical? How should this truth guide plans for personal witnessing as a Christian? Could this be true in Bible study? How could a Christian today do this thing: to "come apart" and to "rest"? How could a personal program of private devotions accomplish the same end?

4. Jesus feeds the five thousand

Mark 6:34-44

The gospel tells us that the living God sees men and knows their problems and needs. Man needs food, clothing, shelter and will suffer when he has not enough.

But man also needs to be watched over and guided, even as sheep need a shepherd. When man is left alone he is soon lost and in distress. The gospel tells us that the Lord is moved with compassion when he sees man in his misery.

When Jesus of Nazareth told his disciples to feed the multitude, they were puzzled to know how to do this. They could see the people were hungry and they cared about their suffering, but they did not have enough food for so many. It is very significant to notice the things Jesus did in solving the need.

Jesus took what they had from a little boy among them. He used what they already had in their hands.

He instructed the disciples to organize the whole multitude into orderly groups, This was done before the food was produced, and so it required obedience from the disciples and willingness from the people.

Then he took the little food they had and thanked God for it, praying blessing upon it. There was enough to feed everyone and leave "twelve baskets full of fragments, and of the fishes."

The story leaves no room for doubt that the food was multiplied by the Lord as he gave it to them. This could only be done by the power of God, which Jesus used to help the people while he was demonstrating that he was the Son of God.

List five miracles performed by Jesus of Nazareth. How does each one indicate who Jesus of Nazareth is? How would knowing about his miracles increase faith in him? How would knowing about his miracles help a believer to obey I Peter 5:7? If a person were not educated or skilled, might he be called to serve the Lord? How would knowing about this miracle of feeding the multitude help him?

5. Jesus communes with his Father

Mark 6:45-47

Often when a man arranges to have time for prayer there is some special reason, like a serious matter of judgment, or the confession of some major sin. When a person spends a long time in private prayer there is usually some difficult decision to be made or some shattering distress to endure.

Jesus of Nazareth was without sin, and seemed always to know all that was involved in any

situation he was in. This would seem to remove the need for prolonged prayer. Yet in this passage it is obvious Jesus arranged for privacy and for solitude that he might have time for praying to his Father. Since he was not burdened with sin or frustration, he would have some other reason for communing with God.

When two persons are in love with each other they seek to be with each other. They find joy in communion. It was even so with the Son and the Father. Jesus often said, "I and my Father are one." He explained his own conduct by pointing out, "I do always the things that please him (the Father)." God had announced from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus would spend time in prayer to share in the joy and the blessing of communion with his Father. This can guide the Christian in his own praying. It is not necessary to wait until we are in trouble or have some practical need. There will be joy and blessing in communion with God. The Christian will find the Spirit within will lead him to say, "Abba, Father." "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Following are passages from the Old Testament listing a number of praying people. What brought each one respectively to prayer? Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33). Jacob (Genesis 32:24-32). Moses (Exodus 32:31-35). Hannah (I Samuel 1:11). David (II Samuel 7:18-29). If Jesus of Nazareth – who was without sin, and knew what was in the heart of man and what was going to happen to him – spent so much time in prayer, what lessons about prayer can you learn from him? How could you improve your prayer habits?

6. Jesus walking on the sea

Mark 6:48-52

All who read the New Testament records or who ever hear about Jesus of Nazareth know that it is written that he performed miracles. Many of the wonderful works recorded were done to help directly persons who were in distress because of some affliction or disease. From this fact some could think that these miracles were performed for the sole purpose of serving men in their need.

But Jesus did some miracles that were not directly involved with people in distress. Walking on the sea was a simple demonstration of power that marked him as the Son of God with authority. It is true the disciples were in some distress because of the storm, and Jesus exercised his power to still the waves for their safety. But walking on the water remains simply as a demonstration of supernatural power.

Jesus was calling men to believe in him as the Christ, the Son of God. If they would believe in him, he would save them unto eternal life. Being in his human form would tend to mislead them into thinking that he was altogether human. As a man he could not save them, but as the Son of God in human form he could deliver them from this world and bring them into spiritual life.

When he walked on the sea, the disciples were so amazed they were frightened. They could not believe what they saw! They thought they were seeing a ghost. He knew how they felt and made sure they would realize who it was. He spoke words of comfort and came into the ship to be with them.

What effect would there be upon the mind of a Sunday School pupil if his teacher did not accept the miracles as true? Could you expect pupils in that class to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ? What is wrong about paying attention only to the physical needs of man? What is wrong with the idea that the most important thing is to educate people to be able to make a better living? Will changing the environment necessarily change a person? Explain. Were the miracles performed primarily to help people in their daily lives? What is suggested by this account of Jesus walking on a stormy sea?

7. Jesus continues his ministry

Mark 6:53-56

The healing works done by Jesus of Nazareth were a very real blessing to the sick and to their friends. It was this ministry that was widely reported, so that whenever he appeared anywhere people brought their sick to him. The record is that of those who came he healed them all.

Two wonderful facts are a blessing even to this day. He never rejected anyone – he was no respecter of persons. "Whosoever" came was healed. The other truth is that he was able to heal anyone and everyone who came: nothing was too hard for him. This record provides wonderful assurance to anyone today who is in need of help!

But healing the body was not the real reason for the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Though people who came to him or touched him were healed, he did not tarry in any community to make sure every sick person in that community was healed. He would always move on to other towns, and even into country regions bringing his message to as many as he could possibly reach. He was calling them to believe in him as the Son of God, the Christ, who could and would save all who believed in him.

"He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again" – this is the truth about our physical bodies. Healing the body is only temporary because it will die eventually anyway. But saving the soul is much more important (Mark 8:36, 37). Jesus healed sickness and disease to show his power and his purpose. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

What must anyone in need do if he would receive help from Christ Jesus the Lord? Why would anyone in trouble come to Jesus Christ? If persons who have been helped never told anyone about their blessing, who would be the loser? What brings people to hear a famous evangelist? Is it possible that a person could come to scoff and stay to pray? Should the fact that some persons do not believe the gospel stop an evangelist from preaching? Even if some persons come only for personal advantage does this mean no one can be helped?

Make a Decision

The Christian is saved to serve. We are to be God's ambassadors of the gospel of peace to a world lost, empty, hurting and dying.

We do not have to do it in our own strength or power; we are equipped by Christ Jesus and are given power to witness a good profession by the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," starting at home and spreading out to the ends of the earth.

Do you feel that you are witnessing for him where you live? Would you know how to do it?

What has this week's study meant to you?

What new truth about the gospel have you learned?

His Power Was Real

Bible reading for this week: John 14:12-31

An power belongs to God. Power is the capacity to do things – to get work done. It is a term used to refer to whatever it is that causes things to happen.

Jesus of Nazareth manifested power that was supernatural. He touched the leper and said, "Be thou clean," and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. He opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk, and raised the dead. But he did not claim this power as his own! He claimed that it was God who performed the works. He promised his followers, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do" (John 14:12).

1. Criticism of the Pharisees

Mark 7:1-6

Jesus of Nazareth came to bring people to God that they might be saved. Prophets in Old Testament times had written of the promise of God to send a Saviour who would deliver his people. Before Christ came God revealed his law, thus showing man what would be pleasing to God in the life and conduct of his people. Righteousness in God's sight would involve each and every detail of living.

The Pharisees were very religious people who accepted the Scriptures as the true Word of God and tried to achieve righteousness by carrying out in specific regulations every detail mentioned as evidence that God's people were obeying God's will. What began as a very earnest effort to be righteous before God, became a superficial matter of keeping rules outwardly. It is true that a man should honor God by sharing in the public worship of God by attending church. But the Pharisees would insist on attendance at church so many times a week even if the churchgoer did not really worship God in his heart while he was there. Jesus repudiated such teaching as being false in the sight of God.

The Pharisees carried their zeal for regulations into all aspects of life. They had developed an elaborate set of rules which included washing of hands before eating. Just because these were their own invention they were very insistent that they be observed.

The disciples of Jesus were not trained to observe the regulations of the Pharisees, but to be obedient to the revealed will of God, whatever that might be. When the Pharisees saw this they were aroused to sharp criticism of the disciples, and they brought their criticism to Jesus since he was their Master.

What does it mean to "worship" God? How could "worshiping" God and "serving" God be much alike? How would it be possible for a person to attend church and to participate in the procedures of the entire service and yet not be worshiping God? Would it be fair to say that if a person did not go to church he did not worship God at all? Would it be possible to serve God by avoiding all questionable habits? Would it be possible to refrain from all such habits and not be worshiping or serving God?

2. Teaching about spiritual life

Mark 7:14-23

The Bible speaks of natural life and spiritual life (I Corinthians 15:40-50). Even though the Christian has both, they are not the same, nor is the one a special form of the other. They are as different as body and soul. The body lives in the natural world and is nourished by bread. The soul should live preeminently in the spiritual world and be nourished by the Word of God (Matthew 4:4).

If a man was injured in an accident and lost both thought that this kind man would not withhold what could help. In any case her answer showed humility and confidence.

She did not hesitate to accept the lowly social position accorded to her by popular opinion, nor did she shrink from arguing her need in an appeal to his charity.

What mistakes in terms of spiritual benefits could a person make if it were true that neither his parents nor grandparents had been members of a church?

What do we know about God's attitude toward social distinctions?

What does a mother who does not belong to a particular church have to overcome if she wants to bring her child to the Sunday School? Would a little girl from a Jewish home have any problems to face if she wanted to attend your Sunday School or church? Why is it sometimes true that employees do not want to come to the church where employers or supervisors are the leaders? How can denominational pride hinder spiritual experience? How would you handle a situation in which you found yourself being rated low because of social distinctions?

4. Healing the deaf and dumb

Mark 7:32-37

The mighty works of Jesus of Nazareth are sometimes discounted as if they were works of magic. This is not a right view even though the deeds are beyond the natural. As a matter of fact there is something about these miracles that keeps them within the range of reason.

When the deaf and dumb person was brought to Jesus, he was led away from the multitude. Just why this was done is not explained, but it was definitely noted. It is possible that the person's own attention and will was involved, and that he was taken away from distraction so that he could heed exactly what was done to him.

The record also tells in detail exactly what Jesus did: He "put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." There is no explanation and yet such specific detail could be meaningful: he touched the very places where the blemishes were. The simplicity of his actions is an eloquent testimony to the fact that the release was the result of his word, not of any physical action.

Again it is to be noted that Jesus did not cause new ears to grow out, nor did he enable speech to come some other way than by the natural means, the tongue. It would seem from the record that Jesus saw the need in a natural way, and that he acted to restore the ears and the tongue to their natural function. In this we may well have a promise as to the ultimate result of salvation: God will through Christ Jesus restore man to his true potential.

In what ways was the work of Jesus with the deaf and dumb person different from medical assistance? What features of this account would indicate that Jesus was not seeking fame or notoriety? Was Jesus more interested in the deaf and dumb, or in the multitude? If an evangelist today were going to follow the example of Jesus what would be some of the things he would do? How did this miracle affect the multitude? What personal questions has this study answered for you?

5. Feeding the four thousand

Mark 8:1-9

Jesus of Nazareth performed many miracles which were not recorded (John 20:30), which gives the impression that such as are, were recorded for a ..special purpose. Since the procedure followed by Jesus in today's reading was so similar to the former occasion when he fed 5,000 (Mark 6:33-46) there could be unusual significance in this demonstration of power. The record does show a number of aspects that could be notable.

The ministry of Jesus attracted much interest. People came in multitudes and stayed for days to hear him and to see him, as well as to have their sick and infirm healed. Their interest was so great that they continued to stay with him even after their food supply was exhausted.

Though Jesus was primarily interested in the spiritual welfare of their souls, he was also aware of the natural needs of their bodies. Even though the multitude was gathered to hear him. their bodies would still need food, and he was sympathetic with their plight. As he moved to supply their need, he arranged that they should be served in an orderly fashion. He did not bring in food from some other place or produce it in any spectacular way. He took the loaves and fishes which they had, gave thanks and distributed the food by the disciples' hands.

The fact that seven baskets of scraps were collected afterward emphasizes the fact that the food was actually multiplied.

What does the fact that Jesus took note of their physical hunger teach anyone interested in Christian education? If a large rally is being planned for missions, what must the promoter consider besides a place large enough to seat the people? What evidence can you point out which will show that orderly arrangements should be made even if the almighty power of God is to be exercised? How does this incident teach that the little we have can be important in serving the Lord? How did Jesus manage to keep his disciples involved in this event? What does this incident teach about God's economy in providing by his grace? What evidence is there that' this was done for the sake of the apostles as well as for the sake of feeding the hungry people?

6. Warning against false teaching

Mark 8:15-21

Spiritual truth is hard to communicate because it involves that which is invisible. For that reason figurative language is used and symbols are employed. A man may wear a small cross on his coat lapel and everyone knows he is identifying himself in some way with the gospel.

There are many symbols besides the cross that have become well known. The Gideon torch, the fisherman hook, the tables of the law, the burning bush and the dove – all have their own classic meaning.

There are also figures of speech such as the seed of the Scripture, the sword of the Spirit, the oil of the Holy Spirit – all of which have well-known meanings.

The parables were used to convey truth more simply than by explanation: the sower and the seed, the good Samaritan, and the prodigal son. With the use of any such literary devices the hearer must have a willing heart or the truth does not come through (Matthew 13:10-17).

When the disciples had forgotten to take bread on board ship and were naturally thinking of food, Jesus warned them, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." They failed to understand his meaning, thinking he was referring to their lack of bread to eat!

He chided them for failing to catch his meaning. He was referring to the doctrine (see Matthew 16:12) of the Pharisees and the others. Such teaching is to the mind as bread is to the body. As we hear it or read it we are tempted to get their ideas into our own thoughts.

In what sense is false doctrine and error like leaven in bread being prepared for food?

If a teacher did not believe in the spiritual power of the gospel how could error be taught in the social sciences? If a teacher did not believe that the life of Jesus was entirely without sin, how could the life of Jesus be taught to leave the impression that he was one of the irregulars? What happened in both cases of feeding the multitudes which showed that what seemed to happen really did? What precautions should responsible people take to preserve the testimony of the unusual events that may occur? What encouragement has this study given you?

7. Healing the blind

Mark 8:22-26

Jesus of Nazareth performed many miracles by the simple word which he spoke, whereas some of the sick were healed, like the woman with the issue of blood, merely by touching the hem of his garment (Mark 6:56). This makes the case of the blind man in our Scripture so remarkable.

The blind man's friends seemed to think Jesus needed only to "touch him." When they finally brought him to Jesus, it is interesting to note just what the Lord did.

First, Jesus "led him out of the town." Apparently the presence of a large crowd could cause delay in being blessed.

Then Jesus "spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him." After this the man could see partially, imperfectly. Then Jesus put his hands "again upon his eyes" and made him look up, and "he was restored, and saw every man clearly." This whole procedure is so different it deserves special attention. There is no explanation as to why Jesus did as he did.

From other instances of working wonders it would seem clear that there was no medicinal quality to the spittle, nor any special power in the touch of the hand, and yet here these features were included – perhaps to help *faith*.

Here we see how God met the individual needs of one man in a unique way. And we can be reassured that He will meet our individual needs, taking what pains are necessary to bring us to him.

In this incident it would seem that Jesus did not seek fame or notoriety. He took the man out of town to open his eyes, and then he definitely requested that no one should know. Apparently he knew the time was coming when popular opinion would turn against him, and he did not wish to be openly questioned until his hour had come.

List the striking things that seem unique in this incident. What seems to be the first required step to take in coming to God for help? What lesson can be derived from the way in which Jesus dealt with the blind man? What warning is implied for teachers and others who think they understand the ways of God? What lesson is here for friends of anyone who needs blessing? How does the one in need cooperate in seeking blessing from the Lord?

Make a Decision

The gospel of Jesus Christ, when once fully believed, can work tremendous changes in anyone's life. The careless person can become careful and genuine in his daily life. The person enslaved by bad habits can suddenly find he is set free! The Bible discusses it this way, "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

This is the life of God in the soul, giving meaning and purpose to everyday affairs. This is abundant victorious living. Are you having this joy? What did you learn from this week's study which will help you to be a better witness for Christ?

He Knew They Would Kill Him

Bible reading for this week: Matthew 16:13-28

Jesus of Nazareth came to save men from death. Because of sin, death had passed upon all men. The one way in which any sinner could be redeemed from this judgment was through the death of an acceptable substitutionary sacrifice.

The Old Testament prophets had predicted the sufferings of Christ (Isaiah 53), and had described how that "righteous servant" would be "smitten of God, and afflicted." Jesus of Nazareth knew that he would be put to death at the instigation of the chief priests and the elders. When Peter would have fought to protect him, Jesus restrained his loyal follower saying that thus it must be, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

1. What was the will of God for Jesus?

Mark 8:31-33

"To obey is better than sacrifice." For many persons, serving God seems to be a matter of doing something for him. Giving a sum of money, reading so many chapters in the Bible, praying for such a long prayer list, avoiding certain places, abstaining from doing certain things – all of these may actually involve some form of self-denial but may not necessarily be the will of God for the individuals involved. Strange as it may seem, it is a matter of my obeying his specific will for me, not a matter of my doing something for him that I think would be proper or good.

More recently young people have felt the challenge to sacrifice time and self in work camps, in deeds of sacrificial service, thinking to do God's will. But they may follow a mistaken line of thought. It is never a matter of my deciding what would be good for me to do for the Lord, but always a matter of my hearing his Word and obeying his will.

The life of Jesus of Nazareth was not marked by standard patterns which anyone could imitate. One thing stood out above all else: he obeyed his Father. This involved communing with his Father in praying and then obeying his Father's will. In Gethsemane he expressed the principle, "Not my will but thine be done." The career of Jesus of Nazareth shows clearly that the will of God will mean denial of self and the crucifixion of the flesh. He said, "To this end was I born," and recognized what the cross would mean when he said, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." The will of God for Jesus was that he should die in the flesh, and be raised from the dead, that he might live forever.

How could a person make a mistake in deciding he is going to serve the lord? What does God actually demand from a person who wants his blessing?

If a person wanted to do the will of God, how could he learn that will for him? How would Bible study help? How would prayer be helpful? Write out Galatians 2:20. What did this verse mean in Paul's life? What would this truth actually look like in your own words?

2. Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

Mark 8:27-30

Jesus was the name given to the babe of Bethlehem. This is the Greek form of the name Joshua,

and was a common name among the people as was the name Joseph. Because there were no family names it was common to identify a man by mentioning the city he was from. Since Jesus grew up as a boy in Nazareth, he was known as Jesus of Nazareth, even as Paul was called Saul of Tarsus.

Jesus of Nazareth was born as a member of the house of David in the tribe of Judah. Both Mary, his mother, and Joseph, Mary's husband, belonged to this family.

But when Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" they did not mention his human name, Jesus, nor his family of the house of David. Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ."

Christ was the title to be given to the One who would come from God to save his people. The word "Christ" means "the Anointed One," to be used to identify the person chosen by God to provide salvation for all who would heed God's call to obey him. "Christ" is the Greek word, and "Messiah" is the Hebrew word that means "the Anointed One."

This title refers to his function as to what he has done, does and will do. It is like the word "farmer," "teacher," "nurse," and the like, in that it refers to what that person does.

Prophets in the Old Testament predicted that God in his grace would send one person to save his people – delivering them from their enemies, ruling over them and leading them into obedience to the will of God. He would be the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15). He would be a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). He would be the "seed of Abraham" (Galatians 3:16). He would be the "seed of David" (Romans 1:3).

What did Jesus of Nazareth mean in each of these statements, respectively:

"I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). "I am the door" (John 10:7). "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14). "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 14:6). Why is the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth important (Matthew 1:18-2:23; Luke 1:26-2:20)?

3. What will it cost to follow him?

Mark 8:34-38

"To deny self" means to be willing to give up everything and to do without anything. As long as a person does not have much it would not seem difficult to "give up everything." But for the rich it is hard (Matthew 19:22-24). As long as a person is not hoping for much, it would not seem hard to accept the prospect of doing without. But for the young it is hard. When it is once understood that denying self means letting things go and giving up all hope of having and doing and being – then the full shock of accepting Christ as Saviour and yielding to him as Lord can be felt.

"The servant is not greater than his lord." Jesus of Nazareth was entirely obedient to his Father and could say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

Paul had many natural, human and even religious assets, but he counted all things but refuse that he might win Christ and be found in him. This is the pattern we must follow that we may fully belong to him and fully share in his salvation.

It now means not only that I must give up whatever I may have now, "Go and sell that thou hast"; but also I must yield any hopes I may be cherishing about the future. It is at this point I can feel he might win Christ and be found in him. This is the point I can feel that I am setting aside the whole world! True I do not now have the whole world in my possession but in my hopes and dreams I do! I want to feel free to accept any part of it as my own!

At this point the young person in some respects makes the larger decision. He may yet think he could have any of it, and he now faces the call to set aside every hope, every ambition and be willing to accept only what God's will provides. Jesus assured Peter that anyone who has given up all for Christ's

sake will receive an hundredfold in the will of God.

In what way is accepting the "call of God" in the gospel like accepting a proposal for marriage?

Abraham is sometimes called the "father of the faithful"; describe the steps in his affairs until he was totally yielded to God, as seen in these passages:

Genesis 12:1

Genesis 13:5-18

Genesis 22:1-12

Note the blessing given to Abraham because he believed God (Genesis 22:15-18), and compare it with what Jesus told Peter in Matthew 19:27-30.

4. What was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration?

Mark 9:1-8

The reality of the spiritual world is actually very dim with many. Because it is invisible. Awareness of it is by faith. The reality of electricity would be hard to believe if it were not for demonstrations of power. Spiritual reality is even more "out of sight." But the transfiguration of Jesus of Nazareth is a revealing manifestation of reality.

The spiritual world is real. Peter, James and John were shown evidence that it is just as real as the natural world. Jacob had seen the ladder with the bottom on earth, the top in heaven (Genesis 28:12). Now these three apostles saw Jesus "transfigured before them."

The spiritual world is powerful. Natural things were transfigured by a power greater than the natural. The spiritual world has living persons with fellowship among them. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Apparently their identities are the same as they were in this world, and the things of this world are known to them.

The spiritual beings and manifestations can disappear without leaving any trace here. They seem to be quite free from this natural world.

Jesus of Nazareth and the three apostles came down from the mount and resumed their ministry in this world just as before. It would seem, however, that Peter never forgot the significance of what he saw (II Peter 1:16-18). Jesus of Nazareth was actually the Son of God even while in this world.

Why would it be important for the apostles to be convinced beyond any doubt as to the reality of the spiritual world? List at least three facts demonstrated on the Mount of Transfiguration. What do you learn from the fact that only three of the apostles were present at the transfiguration? If a man doubts the reliability of the biblical record, how is he apt to think about the spiritual world? How could the account of the Mount of Transfiguration bring comfort to bereaved persons? List all that seems to be true about heaven as seen in the transfiguration.

5. Who was John the Baptist?

Mark 9:11-13

The New Testament records plainly that John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13-17). It also tells of his preaching, his manner of life, his appearance, and so forth. But none of these things are involved in who he really was! In our Scripture lesson Jesus identifies him as "Elias," which is the Greek version of the name "Elijah."

The Old Testament prophets had made it clear that Elijah must return before Messiah would come (Malachi 4:5, 6). After the confirmation on the Mount of Transfiguration that Jesus was the Son of God,

the Messiah, the disciples raised the question of the doctrine that Elijah must first come. If Jesus was the Messiah, where was Elijah?

Jesus answered by asserting that John the Baptist was Elijah in fulfillment of the Old Testament prediction (Matthew 17:13).

Here is a very important clue to an understanding of prophecy, It seems clear that to say that John the Baptist is Elijah shows that it is the function of Elijah the prophet that was fulfilled by the preaching of John.

No one would claim that John the Baptist is a reappearance of Elijah the Tishbite. Nor need anyone suggest any reincarnation as would be in keeping with some pagan ideas. Rather this is to recognize that the significance of Elijah and of John was not in their natural human bodies but in their spiritual service.

The fulfillment of the prophecies about David does not require a resurrection of David, or his reappearance, he was the king of the people of God, and another shall come in his name as the "King of kings and Lord of all."

In what way was the ministry of John the Baptist like that of Elijah? How was the preaching of John the Baptist like the preaching of the Old Testament prophets? What great events did John the Baptist miss because he died too soon in the history of New Testament times?

6. How did Jesus Christ feel toward his followers?

Mark 9:38-44

Jesus of Nazareth did not expect that all his followers would belong to the same group. He restrained the natural tendency to criticize others who may be different, and who may not belong to the same company, with a direct command: "Forbid them not." He then went on to explain that no one who is doing things in his name can speak evil of him, and laid down the broad principle that "he that is not against us is on our part" (verse 40). Tolerance toward various groups of followers should be the common attitude of any Christian.

Jesus went on to show his identification with each believer by promising that "whosoever" shows any kindness to one of his followers because that one belongs to him, will certainly receive his reward. It is a comforting assurance to know that the Lord watches over each Christian to see how he is being treated because he is a Christian, but it is just as sobering a warning to anyone who injures any Christian.

The sternest words spoken by Jesus occur here in Mark's Gospel, warning all men everywhere" that anyone who "offends" one of his followers will be dealt with in the most severe fashion. "Offend" means to "cause to stumble." What will be the fate of anyone who so handles the Scriptures that the faith of a Christian is damaged? What will happen for sure to anyone who so talks about the gospel that a Christian is caused to falter in his faith? Nowhere else did Jesus ever use such sharp words of warning!

What should be the attitude of a Christian toward another Christian whose theological interpretations differ from his own?

What would it mean to a Christian to know that the living Lord Jesus Christ is watching over him? What warning does Christ Jesus give about any person who would cause one of his believers to stumble? How could a preacher from the pulpit cause any of his hearers to stumble into error or unbelief? How could a young Christian be led astray in matters of faith or personal conduct by another Christian?

7. Who is the greatest among the followers of Jesus Christ?

Mark 9:33-37

The greatest person is often regarded as the one who has the most of what I want. If I want money the greatest person is the person who has the most money. If I want to play a piano the greatest person is the best piano player. If I want friends, the greatest person is the one who has the most friends. If I want to be noticed the greatest person in my eyes is the most famous one.

The disciples were discussing who was the greatest. Jesus took this occasion to teach them what he considers great. He showed that he wanted above all else to serve.

To be humble would be the first principle to follow. "Let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3) is one sign of the mind of Christ. To deliberately take the lowest place, to come last in the line, would be the basic pattern. This is the proper outlook upon other persons.

To be dependent on the Lord would be the general attitude. He took a child and when he had taken him in his arms he proceeded to emphasize that a child in arms is the best illustration of a real believer. A child is genuine, honest, expecting to receive from the parent, taking what it needs, without any thought of paying or of deserving. This frame of mind in the believer would be pleasing to the Lord.

With such persons the Lord identifies himself. The believer does not need to face the world in himself or by himself. By committing himself wholly unto the Lord, he can have the presence of the Lord with him at all times. The babe in arms does not need to decide about the world: this is what his mother will do for him.

What is the difference between what Jesus of Nazareth taught about greatness and what the world commonly teaches? What characteristic must always be active in the heart of a truly great Christian? How is a babe in arms so much like a believer who is really trusting Christ Jesus? Name two possible situations in which a Christian could practice humility if – (a) he were a college student in a secular university. (b) she were a mother with an unsaved husband teaching her children about the Lord. (c) she were a young woman in the business world. (d) he were a young business man with promise of promotion.

Make a Decision

"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). These are the words of Christ Jesus even before the foundation of the world – as he indicated his willingness to do only what would be pleasing to his heavenly Father.

He could also say while here in the flesh, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). His central thought was always to honor his heavenly Father. His will is always satisfying and rewarding to the soul. Have you sought his will for you? Seek and you shall surely find.

There Is a Price to Pay

Bible reading for this week: Luke 14:25-35

Jesus Christ came to reconcile me to God. By calling men to come to God to receive his grace, Jesus was offering salvation to "whosoever believeth in him." In order to come any man must leave behind all that he had as his own. If I am to receive something offered to me, I must drop whatever I have in my hands at the time I hear the offer.

Discipleship involves forsaking all that I have, all that I am and all that I might hope to be. Esteeming my Saviour and Lord more important to me than my family, my country or my career will not hurt my service in my home, as a citizen, or in my daily work.

1. As a little child

Mark 10:13-16

Little children came to Jesus of Nazareth. It is commonly reported in the Gospels that he would take them into his arms. This is one of the significant lines of evidence to give a true view of the kind of person Jesus was.

We know he deferred to no man, never apologizing to anyone, and never relinquishing his personal authority. Even soldiers quailed before his simple majesty (John 18:6). Pilate was smitten in his own heart when Jesus stood in his court, with no sign of being impressed by the authority of the Roman governor. He made no concession to any display of human importance or authority. He was the "King of kings, the Lord of all."

Yet when his disciples would have turned away little children that they should not trouble him, Jesus was displeased, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). He then went on to teach that little children are illustrations of the frame of mind he would produce in the Kingdom of God. He pointed out that anyone wishing to enter the Kingdom must come as a little child, receiving as a free gift all that is prepared in the grace of God.

When he finished he treated them in such a way that the little children would be sure of his personal regard for each one. What caused the disciples to rebuke those who brought the children? What characteristics of a little child would cause Jesus of Nazareth to say believers must be like them? What characteristics must we show to be eligible to enter the Kingdom? Can you think of a good reason why Jesus took the little children into his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them? What reasons are usually given for organizing and promoting a junior church during the morning worship hour? What wrong impressions must be guarded against if little children are put in the nursery or enrolled in the junior church during the regular worship service? Why did Paul speak of young Christians as "babes in Christ"? (See I Corinthians 3:1.) What is the principal responsibility of a babe in Christ (I Peter 2:2)?

2. One thing thou lackest

Mark 10:17-22

To have eternal life demands that a person yield himself to the will of God. It is a common error to

think that doing certain things in obedience to the law of God will qualify a person to receive eternal life. This would be a matter of performing certain works by way of earning or deserving the blessedness of communion with God. The mistake in this idea can be easily seen. This assumes we can be good enough and do good enough to entitle us to receive the blessing, which is not true because of our sinfulness. On the other hand, it overlooks and ignores what Christ Jesus has already done in his dying for us that we should be reconciled to God. The truth is that Christ Jesus has already made us acceptable to God. We now only need to yield ourselves in receiving Christ as our Saviour and Lord. The problem we face in accepting Christ Jesus as our Saviour and Lord is that we are called upon to yield ourselves entirely into his will. The difficulty is that we are already involved in things we want to have, places where we want to go, and activities we want to share. There is so much of us that we do not want to miss or lose or give up. But just here is exactly the spot where the whole matter is settled. If we want eternal life we must be willing to exchange all of us for all of him. If we wish to receive the fullness of the blessing of God we must be willing to empty our hands of what we are holding now.

What he was being asked to do was to give up temporary riches for eternal riches. He was asked to exchange a hot dog for a steak.

The rich young ruler felt sorrow when he realized he would need to give away to others much that he personally appreciated. If he wanted to bring home a pail full of honey he would need to empty the pail of all that now was in it.

What wrong idea did the young man have about receiving the blessing of God? How did the young man know that keeping the rules would not give him eternal life? What does selling anything actually mean? Does giving to the poor mean that you have eternal life? What will save you? Name four possessions or assets a person could have which are not money. How could a person give each one to the poor?

3. Who then can be saved?

Mark 10:23-27

If we want to receive the blessing of eternal life in Christ Jesus, we must be willing to give up all we have. If we have what we appreciate and value, we will find this hard to do. If our own experiences are unhappy and undesirable, it is easier for us to let everything go that we might accept Christ. But we must give up all, even if it is good and we esteem it very precious.

When Jesus of Nazareth told the rich young ruler he would have to give his wealth away to the poor in order to be able to receive eternal life, the young man went away sorrowful, "for he had great possessions" (verse 22). Jesus then pointed out to his disciples that it was hard for any person who had "riches" to enter into the Kingdom of God. "And the disciples were astonished at his words."

It is hard to realize that being good, doing good and having goods, will not help in becoming a Christian, but rather may actually be a hindrance to us! What is necessary is that we put all our trust and confidence in Christ Jesus, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." If what we have is good or precious, we will not want to give it up. And this may actually hinder our spiritual life.

The "needle's eye" was the small gate through which persons on foot could enter the city after the large highway gates were closed. A camel could squirm through this small gate, but only with effort, by taking off his load of luggage and by getting on his knees to crawl through. This is a very apt picture of what anyone with riches must do to become a Christian: he must give up his assets and humble himself.

Why would it be hard for a sports hero to be a real Christian? Why would it be hard for an honor student to become a real Christian? How would it be difficult for a successful lawyer to be a fully committed Christian? How could the inheriting of a large sum of money be a hindrance to, the spiritual life and growth of a Christian? How could the loss of an election turn out to be an actual

blessing for a Christian? How can a wealthy man become a real Christian?

4. The blessings of those who believe

Mark 10:28-31

Believing the gospel and accepting Christ Jesus involves the surrender of all that one has to the will of God. Jesus told his disciples that anyone who gives up anything for the sake of the Lord or for the sake of the gospel would receive an hundredfold "now in this time" of property, or of relatives, with persecutions.

Apparently he would receive an unlimited supply of folk he could count on as kin, and also would be abundantly cared for as to his material needs. He would, however, receive persecutions. In this it would be demonstrated "the servant is not greater than his Lord." Christ Jesus suffered persecutions, so his followers can and should expect the same.

Not only will the believer receive more than a fair replacement of what he gives up, together with persecution; but he will receive eternal life in the world to come. This need not mean after his departure from this life. "The world to come" may refer to the spiritual which is real now, even though it is to be manifested some time in the future.

"Eternal life" is actually the life of God and this is available now for whoever believes in him. While it is true that in a very real sense this life will be dominant "in the world to come," it is also true that it is given now to any who receive Christ Jesus. Often one of the great fears of persons who come to Jesus is the fear of giving up certain securities. Here we have God's promise of provision.

It is a fact that they who give up all to receive Christ Jesus shall receive much more than what they gave up. It is also true that those who yield all, and so are the least, shall receive everything and so become the greatest! What three things will happen to a soul that forsakes all that he has to follow Christ? Describe what is likely to happen to a beauty contest winner in college, who is converted and resigns her place of fame as a beauty, and begins training as a missionary. What is the meaning of "he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time" in Mark 10:30? Explain "Many that are first shall be last" (Mark 10:31). Describe some of the "persecutions" that may come to the young convert on the college campus, in the office or in public life.

5. What happened to Jesus?

Mark 10:32-34

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." This simple tragic record tells the story of the earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth. He had no personal interest or ambition. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The Jewish people themselves rejected Jesus of Nazareth because they did not understand the gospel he was teaching (John 6:66). His own neighbors rejected him because they did not believe he was anything more than human (Matthew 13:54-58).

Judas Iscariot, one of his own apostles, betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14, 15). Simon Peter, another of his apostles, denied him in the presence of the soldiers (Matthew 26:69-75).

The chief priests and scribes condemned him to death because he claimed to be the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-68), and delivered him over to the Roman court for execution. Pilate sentenced him to death because he was afraid of an uproar among the people (Matthew 27:24-26). The soldiers abused him

because he was a condemned criminal (Matthew 27:27-31). One of the thieves, the chief priests and the scribes taunted him with mockery because he would not save himself from death (Matthew 27:39-44).

"But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 13:30). "Up from the grave he arose, In mighty triumph o'er his foes." "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matthew 28:6). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

What seems so strange that chief priests and scribes should join forces against Jesus of Nazareth? How could it happen that the elders and deacons in a congregation would be opposed to a convert who wants to see Christ Jesus honored? How could other students persecute a girl or a boy who had given personal commitment to Christ in an open confession of faith?

6. Personal ambition among the disciples

Mark 10:35-45

The natural interest to advance one's self can show up even in spiritual matters. People can be jealous of each other even in church affairs. Pride can be seen even among Sunday School teachers. Politics can be found even in the boards of the church. It is so easy to mistake as zeal something which is really only ambition to be prominent.

Two of the disciples of Jesus came to him with a request to be given the privilege of sitting next to him when he was revealed in glory. First, Jesus tested them as to whether they would be willing to pay the price such prominence would cost. They said they were willing. Then Jesus told them such decision was not really in his hands to make, but he went on to use this incident to teach all the disciples the attitude they should have.

After recognizing that it was the common natural attitude to seek eminence by having open preference over others, he revealed that such is not consistent with his will, and therefore should not be among them. Rather than seeking prominence which Hatters the ego, as his disciples they should look for the lowest place so that they might serve more.

"I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). "God is love" and love seeks to help, to serve. Therefore, whoever is serving is doing the will of God. The most eminent one in the spiritual world will be the greatest servant. The believer who denies himself, takes up the cross, and follows Christ Jesus will gladly live this way.

How is it such a snare for a Christian to be ambitious to be known as the best clerk in the store? Is there any danger to a Christian who wants to be recognized as the best Bible teacher? If a Christian wanted to become great among a group of believers, how should he act?

7. The function of faith

Mark 10:46-52

Faith is a mode of action in which a person calls on God to do according to his promises. Blind Bartimaeus needed help. Because he needed food he "sat by the highway side begging." Passersby had food and so he asked them for alms. When Bartimaeus "heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." By calling him the "son of David" Bartimaeus showed that he esteemed Jesus to be the Messiah. Despite opposition he continued to cry out so that "Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called." Eagerly Bartimaeus came to Jesus. When Jesus asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Bartimaeus did not ask for food, as he would have done if he had thought of Jesus as an ordinary man; but said, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." By calling him "Lord" and by asking for an exercise of supernatural power, the blind man showed his faith in

Jesus as the Messiah. The very fact that he asked with confidence showed that he believed Messiah could and Messiah would answer this request. Bartimaeus was not disappointed. "Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." His faith brought him to Jesus and enabled him to ask for his sight. Only God could give him sight, and this was done. From that time on, Bartimaeus was a follower of Jesus Christ.

Why would some discourage an aroused seeker of truth from coming to Christ? How is Jesus' procedure in the healing of this man different from that used with the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34)? What evidence is there that the blind man really wanted his sight?

Make a Decision

God has promised great blessings to every soul that puts his full trust in Christ Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

This always involves getting rid of self and the worldly ambitions one has. However, when that is done, Christ Jesus fills the soul and life with himself: "I will come in and sup with you and you with me." It is here in his presence that we find that "the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." Are you having this fellowship with your Lord? It is yours for the asking.

All the Time He Was God

Bible reading for this week: John 1:1-26

While Jesus of Nazareth carried on his public ministry people looked on him in human form and thought of him as a man. Even when they saw the miracles which he performed, and were completely at a loss to account for his power, they still thought of him as a man.

But all the time he was God. His disciples witnessed his fellowship and communion with his heavenly Father in prayer. They heard him report to his Father about his earthly mission and pray for his disciples' welfare. They also learned that Jesus intended that his followers should have a relationship with the Father similar to his own. In all his praying he talked "as one having authority."

1. The triumphal entry

Mark 11:1-7

Jesus of Nazareth came to do the will of his Father. God created man in his own image. Man would then live his full life by obeying the will of God. It is part of the sin of man to serve himself. God's plan was that man would obey his will to be blessed. Because of sin man is under condemnation and faces only death. In his mercy, God sent his Son to redeem man and to save him into eternal life and blessing.

The prophets had promised the people of God that God would send his Messiah to deliver them. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:4). When Jesus of Nazareth came he obeyed the will of God at all times. He set a perfect example of obedience.

The plan of God is that his Son shall rule over all who believe in him. Their obedience is to be full and free. Despite natural disposition to be willful and selfish, under his control his people are to be obedient in complete yieldedness.

A perfect demonstration was seen when Jesus came to Jerusalem. His riding upon a colt, upon which no man had ever ridden, was a striking demonstration of control. Despite natural disposition and natural behavior this colt willingly, obediently carried Jesus of Nazareth down the street in the midst of a demonstrating crowd. Such was the power of the Son of God over the nature of the colt.

When any man believes in Jesus Christ and yields to his presence and control, the conduct which follows will manifest willing obedience to God.

Why did Jesus of Nazareth choose this method of travel to come to Jerusalem at this time (Zech. 9:9)? What is the significance of the fact that no man had ever sat on this colt? What can be learned from the conditions under which the two disciples were instructed to find and bring this colt? Why was it important that Jesus should be identified as the promised King? How did his control over the colt help to confirm his claim that he was Messiah (Isaiah 11:6)? In what way is the control of the Lord over the human heart pictured in this incident? From this event what can be expected about the role of Christ when he comes to be received by his own? On the basis of this incident what should a believer expect Christ to do in his own heart, throughout his own personality?

2. Cleansing the temple

Mark 11:15-18

Some of the actions of Jesus of Nazareth were performed for their teaching values. When Jesus came into Jerusalem riding upon the colt, he came as it was predicted that the King would come (Zechariah 9:9). The people responded to him as it had been predicted they would. It was because of what it would symbolize about the coming of Christ the King that he went to the Temple to cleanse it.

The Temple is the place to worship God. Because it is so important that the heart and mind of the worshiper should be holy, entirely committed to the worship of God, it had been carefully arranged that everything in the Temple should lead the soul to be aware only of God. For this reason it is a common practice, even today, to consecrate the sanctuary in any place of worship by removing anything which would distract the worshiper. For this reason many churches ban any sort of exercises in that dedicated sanctuary, except such as are specifically meant to aid worship.

This is the principle which some earnest believers follow in controlling their own conduct. Because they esteem their bodies and minds to be the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19, 20) they discriminate in behavior to avoid participation in any activities that would distract from full and willing obedience to the Lord (I Peter 2:11).

That Jesus of Nazareth upon being acclaimed the King (Mark 11:9, 10) went directly to the Temple and cast out the moneychangers and all who were active in secular pursuits, is understood by many believers to indicate that accepting Christ Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and receiving the Holy Spirit, will lead to a cleansing reconstruction of practices of worship and service.

How is a modern church building like the Temple in Jerusalem?

What are some reasons for reserving the use of a church sanctuary for worship services only? How could one understand the apparent violence of the methods used by Jesus to cleanse the Temple (Psalm 69:9)? How could one see a parallel in the refusal of some Christians to drink alcoholic beverages? How could one understand the opposition of some to include secular music in a worship service?

3. Cursing the fig tree

Mark 11:20-26

When Jesus of Nazareth entered Jerusalem in the fashion which had been predicted concerning the King of Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9), his disciples watched closely to note each action he performed. They had seen him pause before a fig tree, which was barren, and curse it because it bore no fruit.

It would be a simple lesson for them to learn that God expects fruit from his people whom he has blessed. The barren fig tree was a clear symbol of the city of Jerusalem that did not recognize their King when he came, and who had no spiritual fruit in their lives. The cursing of the fig tree would be an eloquent symbol of the judgment of God upon any who bear no fruit to the glory of his name.

When the disciples saw in the morning that the tree was "dried up from the roots" they were astonished. Jesus taught them to see in this incident the function of faith.

It might seem that this incident would imply that faith is a power which the believer exerts upon the situation about which he prays. But this would be an unfortunate error. To give Jesus of Nazareth the praise for the power demonstrated would be a mistake. The power so obviously at work was the power of Almighty God. Jesus of Nazareth exercised faith in God and God performed the work.

Another common error is to think that such faith can be applied at any time about any thing at the will of the believer. This was not true of Jesus Christ. "The Son can do nothing of himself." Jesus did always the will of his Father. This would include his praying. It is when the believer asks for the will of

God to be done and believes it will be done, that answers to prayer occur.

What was the prophetic significance of the Messiah's coming to look for fruit (Isaiah 5:1-7)? Before a man can believe, what is necessary?

Why would it seem reasonable that Mark 11:24 refers to "what things soever" as set forth in the promises of God? How do verses 25, 26 show that merely saying words taken from the Bible is not enough to guarantee effectual praying? Would the phrase "have faith in God" be meaningful if spoken to a Buddhist? Name three promises of God that will apply to tomorrow. Name three promises of God that can be applied to taking a trip. Name three promises of God that can be applied to the preaching of the gospel.

4. Parable of the vineyard

Mark 12:1-9

Jesus of Nazareth used different methods of teaching. Sometimes he acted in line with Old Testament prediction and showed in his conduct what the will of God is (e.g., the cleansing of the Temple). Sometimes he told parables that illustrated some truth.

In the parable of the vineyard Jesus portrayed the course of the history of Israel in their incorrigible disobedience to God. Israel was like a vineyard in that God had specially supervised what had happened to them to give them special privileges and had expected certain results that would be worthy of his favor (Isaiah 5:7).

As Israel had neglected to obey him and to serve him, God had sent his servants (the prophets) to remind Israel of their privilege and their duty. Israel had in turn rejected these messengers and even had abused them. Despite repeated warnings Israel had remained incorrigible in disobedience.

Finally, in the parable, Jesus told how the owner had sent his own son. But their sinful rebellious hearts were so set in disobedience that they rejected and killed the heir. Then Jesus brought out the meaning of the parable by asking his hearers what they thought the master of the vineyard would now do; he answered his own question by flatly announcing that the rebellious keepers of the vineyard would be destroyed.

No one could possibly miss the meaning of the parable. God gives opportunity and privilege to men, and he then expects worthy results. God will not allow willful negligence and disobedience to go without eventual judgment.

This would be just as true in our time with Christians. It is a great privilege to know Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and as the Saviour of men. To know this and then not to yield to him would bring the judgment of God. In this parable what does the vineyard represent (Isaiah 5:7)?

In this parable whom do the servants represent? In this parable whom does the owner's son represent? What lesson from this parable would apply to the life of a Christian? How will God deal with anyone who despises gospel preaching? What treatment would it be wise to give a faithful minister of the Word? What new lesson did you learn from this study?

5. Jesus answers the Sadducees

Mark 12:18-24

Jesus of Nazareth mentioned his heavenly Father again and again. He openly claimed that he did not live his life according to his own ideas, but in everything he obeyed the will of the invisible God. Among the Jews was a party of men who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Mark 12:18), nor in angels nor spirits (Acts 23:8). They were the Sadducees and are among us today as people who do not

believe in heaven, or in the spiritual world. For them everything is to be understood in terms only of earthly living.

Jesus had always made clear the reality of heaven. He taught: "Our Father which art in heaven." The Sadducees felt that they could show by a hypothetical illustration just how unreasonable it was to think of life in heaven after death.

It is very significant that Jesus did not undertake to reason with them. He flatly declared they were in error because of their ignorance of the Scriptures and of the power of God. This is a very illuminating example of how to deal with questions that are based on premises that are not true. Discussion here would be fruitless and actually misleading. It is useless to argue with a blind man that the rose is red, the violet is blue and the lily is white. One can tell spiritual truth to anyone, but very often one cannot convince a person who is ignorant about the Scriptures or who does not have any dealings with God.

It was to those who followed Jesus himself that spiritual illumination was given. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

It is sobering to note there is no record of any Sadducee becoming a disciple or ever being sent as an apostle.

Name three other things a person does not accept if he says, "There is no resurrection." How did Jesus handle this question? How would not knowing the Scriptures contribute to error?

How would not knowing the power of God contribute to error? Since they did not follow Moses why did the Sadducees refer to him in their question? What were the Sadducees seeking to show by their question? How did the tone of Jesus' reply differ from the tone of the question?

6. Jesus answers the Pharisees

Mark 12:13-17

Jesus of Nazareth went about teaching men the truth about the ways of God. The common people heard him gladly and were much impressed. His teaching was so simple, so direct that it put the sophisticated, learned teachers at a disadvantage. This they resented. His enemies began to seek for some way to discredit him or to harass him.

Because he taught that the Kingdom of God should have top priority in any man's mind, the Pharisees and the Herodians thought they saw an Opportunity to bring Jesus into conflict with the Roman government. They felt the problem of paying taxes to Rome would give them their chance.

Rome had conquered Judea and had levied a tribute upon the Jews. This was hated by many because it meant they were giving money to hated foreigners. By raising this question it seemed to Jesus' enemies that he would be in trouble no matter how he answered: if he said "yes," the Jews would hate him; if he said "no," the Roman government would arrest him for sedition.

Jesus saw their hypocrisy but proceeded to answer the problem. Obviously money was of this world. He taught that it should be handled according to the prevailing regulations in this world. What was spiritually significant was not gold or silver, but the heart and the mind. Rome made the coins and the rules of Rome should be paid with the coins; God made the soul of man and the soul should obey the will of God. This principle of guidance in conduct is very much needed among believers today.

What could any witness for the Lord learn about questions asked in public? What can a believer learn about handling questions as they are asked in public?

How did Jesus avoid the trap in which he could have been made to offend the Roman government? Would you say that secular government and the worship of God are the same? How can you see your answer in this incident? How could this incident be used to ease a Christian's conscience about obeying a draft summons? What does this teach about loyalty to one's country? What does it teach about loyalty to God in worship and service?

7. Jesus answers a scribe

Mark 12:28-34

Not all questions are the same. Some are more worthy than others. The Herodians had asked a practical legal question only for the purpose of trapping Jesus into an awkward dilemma (Mark 12:13-17). The Sadducees had asked a logical question with the aim to discredit the doctrine of Jesus as irrational (Mark 12:18-24). But now a scribe comes to ask an ethical question. "Which is the first commandment of all?" (See Mark 12:28.) It would seem that here is a legitimate interest in understanding something with spiritual meaning. And to this valid question Jesus gives a noble answer.

The scribe apparently did not question the Scriptures, nor did he cast aspersions on Jesus as a teacher. He may not yet have believed in Jesus, and he may have meant to test the authenticity of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, but he did turn to the Scriptures for the purpose of appraisal. Jesus gave him a direct and full answer without reservation.

The two commandments which Jesus spoke of as "the first" and "the second" are both set out in the books of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18), and they are implied in the Ten Words given on Mt. Sinai. In what we commonly call the Ten Commandments, it is obvious that the first four are certainly based on Deuteronomy 6:4 and the last five are certainly based on Leviticus 19:18. Apparently the fifth commandment could be included under either the first or the second.

When the scribe answered to show that he understood these two commandments to be the basic requirements of the Law of God, Jesus of Nazareth replied with the approval that this man was "not far from the Kingdom of God."

Of the three questions asked of Jesus, Mark 12:14, 23 and 28, which do you think is the most significant to find out the ways of God? How was Jesus' answer to the scribe's question in verse 28 different from his answer to the Pharisees in verse 14 and to the Sadducees in verse 23? How could one account for the straightforward positive answer in verse 28? How important did the scribe think the answer was which Jesus gave? How does a person love God (John 14:23; I John 5:3)? How does a person love his neighbor (Luke 10:29-37)? What is "pure religion and undefiled before God" (James 1:27)? According to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, what sort of actions will be judged to seal a man's judgment (Matthew 25:31-46)?

Make a Decision

The triumphal entry of Jesus of Nazareth into Jerusalem so illustrates the entrance of Jesus Christ into the soul of whosoever will receive him. Riding on the untamed colt illustrates what he will do when he comes into a life: he will take our untamed and wild natures and make them orderly and calm in the midst of the turmoil of the crowd about us. Is your heart filled with his peace? If not remember: He stands outside the fast closed door – open and let him in. He died that you might live.

He Came to Die

Bible reading for this week: John 18:28-37

Jesus of Nazareth came into this world in the form of man that he might die as a man (Hebrews 2:14, 15). It is true that all men die, but in the case of the Son of God, this would not have been his fate if he had not chosen it.

As the Son of God he is eternal. He had been with his heavenly Father in glory before the world was (John 17:5). But to accomplish the work of salvation he laid aside his glory (Philippians 2:7, 8) "and took upon him the form of a servant," that he might suffer death and be raised from the dead into the newness of life.

This was the reason he had come into the world. It was necessary that he die so that he could carry out his Father's will in saving men.

1. He warned about the end of the world

Mark 13:3-10

Jesus of Nazareth came that men might have life and have it more abundantly. That abundant "eternal life" would never be limited to this world!

When God created Adam, making him of flesh from the dust of the ground, he made him a creature of this world. This world would never be eternal or everlasting. What had been created would one day be destroyed. This was also true of the nature of Adam. When he sinned he was condemned to die.

Even as the earth would one day be destroyed, and all men must die, so Jesus of Nazareth gave his own body of flesh that it should die. Christ Jesus in himself gave the promise of God to raise from the dead all who were in Christ. This is the basis of our gospel.

Although men knew that death would come to them, it was not easy to think the world would be destroyed (II Peter 3:4). And yet it was important that believers should know that the end of the world would come. It would lead into sorrowful disappointment if men expected this world to continue indefinitely. It would be far more wholesome for men to realize that this world is doomed and will one day be completely destroyed.

Jesus warned his disciples of the great danger of being deceived. The promise of God that one day he would send Messiah to rule in a new heaven and a new earth was known to his people. Jesus said there would be different ones coming who would claim to be the Chosen One to lead God's people into glory. He cautioned his disciples to beware of such false Christs. He outlined certain conditions that would prevail during this era of the world's history, and indicated certain things that would have to occur before the end of the world.

How could the knowledge that this world is not eternal affect one's interest in the affairs of this world? How could knowing Jesus Christ is coming back affect one's personal life? Why do you think Jesus of Nazareth's first comment about his return was "Take heed lest any man deceive you"? What did Jesus of Nazareth say about trying to figure out the time he was to come back (Mark 13:32, 33)? What does each of the following parables respectively teach about the Lord's return and the end of the world? Tares (Matthew 13:24-30)? Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)? Read Acts 1:9-11. What do these verses tell you about the certainty of Jesus Christ's return?

2. He warned about being ready for his coming

Mark 13:32-37

Jesus of Nazareth assured his disciples that the end of the world would come, and he would return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. During his earthly ministry he had taught in parables the fact and the significance of his coming. In God's own time he would come, and when he came he would judge. In judgment he would save and he would destroy.

In every parable by which he taught the truth of his coming, Jesus emphasized there would be judgment and promised there would be separation. Those whom he judged to be worthy he would take to be with him, those whom he condemned as unworthy would be destroyed (Matthew 25).

The whole tone of the warning given by Jesus seems to imply clearly that the servant could qualify by being diligent, just as he could miss the blessing by being careless.

Despite the strong positive warning so clearly given by Jesus it is not so obvious as to when the time of his coming will be. Jesus told them that "no man, not the angels which are in heaven" know when that hour will come. But there was never the slightest doubt but that he was coming.

The manner of his coming was described as "sudden," "at a time when no one expected him," but it was obviously expressed in such language as would not reveal any clue as to the actual time. Yet the manner of coming "as a thief in the night" was given to warn everyone to "be ye also ready."

Believers are warned to not try to anticipate "the day nor the hour": they are merely urged to be "ready" at any time. The parable Jesus told to make this warning clear tells of a servant who anticipated the coming would not be any time soon – it was he that came to disaster (Matthew 24: 42-51)!

Who knows when the end of the world will come? Even though Christians do not know when the end of the world will be, how should they feel about it?

When persons get acquainted with the concept coming of the Lord, what two common mistakes are they liable to make? When our Lord told a parable to guide his followers to be ready, which mistake did he illustrate (Matthew 24:42-51)? What evil conduct is a person liable to fall into if he thinks he knows for sure Christ is not coming soon (Matthew 24:48, 49; Mark 13:36)? What is the acceptable attitude toward the time of the end of the world?

3. He announced all would forsake him

Mark 14:26-31

After the supper when Jesus and the apostles were on their way to the Mount of Olives, he announced that they would all be "offended" and would forsake him. Peter spoke up to say that he would not forsake his Master under any circumstances. Jesus told him that before daybreak he would deny him three times. This was utterly unthinkable to Peter: "But he spake the more vehemently. If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." (See verse 31.) And in this all the others said the same thing: "Likewise also said they all."

It is most significant to see the difference in the response of the disciples at this time. Earlier while at the table, Jesus had said, "One of you . . . shall betray me" – and the record is that each one said, "Lord, is it I?" In that case each man personally faced the Word of the Lord: "If only one will betray him, it might be me." But in this case where the statement is general: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," Peter sets the pattern of response by insisting he will be the exception. When all are going to do it, it is easy to feel that I am the exception: "That maybe true for all the rest, but I am different; I am going to do differently." This view was held by each one.

There is a most important principle here for all preaching and teaching. Effectual presentation is made to the individual. To phrase a message in general terms is to miss any significant response.

The New Testament does not discuss the "family" but it has instructions for "husbands," "wives," "fathers," "children," etc. The New Testament does not refer to "society" but it speaks to "citizens." Jesus of Nazareth referred to cities by names as a matter of record, but no discourse of his was ever addressed to any city or village. He dealt with people. He talked to the woman at the well; he called Zaccheus; and he stopped Saul the Pharisee on the Damascus road.

After he had said that one would betray him (Mark 14:8), Jesus went on to say later that all would forsake him (Mark 14:27). What was the response of the apostles in each case respectively? How would you account for the difference in the response? What can be seen in Peter's protest that even if all did forsake him, he would not?

Even after the Lord predicted Peter would deny him three times before morning, how did Peter declare himself? What would cause all the Christians in a certain public gathering to remain quiet when the Lord and the gospel are being attacked?

4. Judas Iscariot planned to betray him

Mark 14:10, 11

When Jesus of Nazareth suffered on behalf of sinners, the general truth was, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." This arouses sympathy anywhere in the world, because any man would recognize the special pain of being rejected by the very people one comes to help. But all this is set forth in the classic denial, notorious all over the world, when Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord.

All the disciples actually forsook him and fled when he was arrested by the Roman soldiers. Peter denied him three times while he stood in the judgment hall. But the action of Judas was in a class by itself. He actually took thirty pieces of silver for his own personal gain for leading the soldiers to Jesus and identifying him for the soldiers by giving him a kiss.

Nothing about this was any surprise to Jesus for he knew what was in the heart of man, and yet it would cause him great grief. In all the records there is no explanation beyond noting that it was Satan who entered into the heart of Judas and prompted him to do this dastardly deed.

How could Judas ever do such a thing? There is a sober lesson here for all of us. It is most important when the soul turns to Jesus Christ that there be no reservations! Somehow in the experience of Judas he had never yielded entirely his love of money. And at a time of crisis and coming disaster, this love of money dominated the mind of Judas.

It is possible to hold a dime so close to the eye that even the midday sun can be shut away! The dime does not obliterate the sun, does not change any reality, but it can put the whole consciousness in the shadow, in the dark.

How did it happen that Judas Iscariot was an apostle? If a man should be called to the pulpit of a large church, is that any assurance he will be a sound and true servant of the gospel? What may the fact that Judas was treasurer of the apostolic company suggest about his character (John 13:29)? Do we have to think that Judas from the first intended to betray his master (John 13:2, 27)? What did Judas do afterward that would indicate he had not always entertained this idea (Matthew 27:3-5)? What happened at the betrayal that suggests Jesus looked very much like any of the others in the company? Why did Judas betray Jesus? How might any believer today betray his Lord for a really insignificant reason?

5. He announced one would betray him

Mark 14:17-21

Jesus of Nazareth announced to the company of disciples on the occasion of the Last Supper that one of them would betray him. Jesus was the master teacher, and loved his followers in a special way. He did not tell them of the betrayal in any idle fashion, but used this as a demonstration that would serve as a warning to all who follow him. If one of the twelve could fall under the influence of Satan to the point where he would betray his Lord to the soldiers, who would kill him for the price of thirty pieces of silver, then each and every follower should guard himself from anything less than total, holy, commitment to his Lord.

There is much to be learned in this incident. Apparently no one suspected Judas! This would be confirmed by the fact that he "had the bag" as treasurer of the apostolic company. The apostles were men of the world, and it is not likely they would have entrusted their money into the hands of Judas if they had had any misgivings as to his integrity.

Each asked, "Is it I?" This is a tribute to their humility and to their honesty. When told that one would betray him, each was prone to feel that if anyone were that weak, it could well be himself! No pride was to be seen among these men, only personal concern lest by weakness one might somehow fail his Lord.

Jesus then told them two things. The traitor was one of them – this would bring grief and self-judgment into each heart. The betrayal had been predicted by Old Testament prophets, but this did not lessen the sinful nature of the deed. God would condemn, punish and destroy the one who betrayed his Lord. May God help each believer to be true in heart and mind and soul!!

Why did Jesus so often tell his disciples what was going to happen before it did? Did the fact that Jesus knew who would betray him make it compulsory for Judas to go through with his plans? If God knows the end from the beginning does that mean that events are forced into following a set pattern? What effect did it have on the apostles when Jesus said one of them would betray him? Did anyone suspect Judas? How serious a matter is it when a soul betrays Christ? What is so especially pathetic about the betrayal of Jesus? Is it possible for even a mature Christian to allow himself to be used of Satan to betray his Lord? How?

6. He was anointed for his burial

Mark 14:3-9

Jesus of Nazareth had constantly taught his disciples that it would be the will of his Father that he should be killed, buried and that he would rise from the dead on the third day. But they did not grasp the reality of this repeated prediction. As a matter of record, when he was actually raised from the dead, his disciples found it very hard to believe! But he had been telling them.

Mary had sat at his feet and heard his word (Luke 10:39). It is possible that she was the only one that realized the truth of what he had been saying about his being killed and buried. Apparently this moved her to bring precious ointment to perfume his feet, as if she were preparing his body for the burial (John 19:38-40). The Lord understood what she had in mind and defended her actions, giving her personal assurance of his approval.

What looked to others as an extravagant gesture of tribute and devotion, Jesus knew was actually done with the consciousness of his imminent death for sinners. With Mary's understanding gained from listening to the Word of God, she knew that he would soon be sacrificed as the Lamb of God on her behalf. The secret of her love was the understanding of his love. "We love him, because he first loved us."

When Mary realized that he would give himself on her behalf, that he would lay down his life as a ransom that she might be saved, then nothing she had was too good for him. She brought the very best she had to him personally as a gift. He endorsed her action as being worthy for all believers everywhere to emulate.

If people give only small portions of their income to the lord's work, what is probably the real cause? If a person really loved the lord what would be his attitude about the amount of his gift? Who will criticize all-out dedicated service as being "too much" – "extravagant"? If a person spent much time around the church because he wanted to help, what sort of criticism is he likely to receive? Why did Mary of Bethany bring such an expensive box of ointment? Where did Mary learn of what Jesus was going to do for her (Luke 10:39)? Why did she love him so (I John 4:19)? What in this incident indicates the importance of Bible reading (Luke 10:39-42)?

7. He accepted the Father's will in Gethsemane

Mark 14:32-39

Jesus of Nazareth lived his life on earth in instant obedience to his Father. When he came to the great climax of his earthly career he turned to his Father, as always, to find out what he should do. Apparently, walking in the will of God takes place step by step. Perhaps the figure of a blueprint, or a timetable, or a formula is not as appropriate as a compass. It seems that it was not so much that Jesus had a pattern all set out long before – but rather that moment by moment he was being guided by the living God.

Just why Jesus shrank from "this cup" is not too clear. It would not be the pain nor would it be the shame of the cross. Lesser men have died with quiet strength. There was something involved in "this cup" which would separate him from his Father which was more awful than we can imagine. But Jesus did not falter in his purpose to obey his Father's Will.

"The servant is not greater than his Lord" – if Jesus of Nazareth shrank from his "cup" none of his followers should afflict himself too much if he hesitates and asks for some way to avoid the grand sacrifice in whatever challenge confronts his obedience. It is not wrong to flinch, but one should not falter.

It is to be noted that praying may take time. The actual request as recorded would be quickly said. but the record indicated that he said it in one hour! Again it may be noted that praying may involve repetition of the request! Jesus of Nazareth possibly spent a second hour as he "spoke the same words"!

Apparently praying is much more than "saying" a request. Doubtless it includes that, but communion with the living God is involved. No matter how prolonged the agony of facing the issue, the actual petition is definite: "Not my will, but thine, be done."

What can we learn about prayer when we see the sinless Son of God turn to his Father in prayer? As we read the words setting forth the cry of his heart, what can we learn about obedience to the will of the Father? While Jesus asked his Father to spare him if that were possible, what was his real prayer each time? Why did Peter fall asleep? What warning did Jesus give based on Peter's sleeping? What happened that made so much difference through the final words of prayer by Jesus?

Make a Decision

"For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18). The things of this world are so full of tinsel and glitter to charm the heart, but only for a time – they will pass away.

God in his Word has made it clear that we can escape this snare if we will keep in mind that what we see will one day be destroyed. He said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures," not on earth, but "in heaven," which is eternal. Where is your heart? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

(See Matthew 6:21.)

They Kicked Him When He Was Down

Bible reading for this week: Matthew 27:15-31

Jesus of Nazareth came to give his life a ransom for many. He called himself the "Good Shepherd" that laid down his life for his sheep. But dying for sinners is only part of the story. The suffering and the shame that were heaped upon him are beyond all measure.

What Jesus suffered as a boy, as a young man, and as a grown man until he was 30 years of age is not recorded. We know only that his brothers did not believe in him. His neighbors would not believe in him even after they saw the miracles he did (Matthew 13:54-57). The record gives the shameful scorn and abuse he received at the hands of the soldiers and high priests.

1. Betrayed by Judas

Mark 14:43-46

The rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews and his crucifixion by the Roman soldiers can well be taken as the actions of men who did not know him, but his betrayal by one of his own apostles, Judas Iscariot, was probably the most distressing part of the whole sad story.

Many artists have painted the likeness of Christ's face as they supposed it might have been. The evidence in this account seems to be that his appearance was so normal that Judas was obliged to identify him for the soldiers by kissing him. Also he hailed him as "Master" that there should be no doubt.

John reports that as they were finished with their supper "the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . . to betray him" Jesus demonstrated his example of humility in washing the disciples' feet, and then announced that one would betray him. Apparently he knew it would be Judas. When he identified Judas, Satan entered into Judas. "Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27).

Judas brought the soldiers and identified Jesus by kissing him. Peter would have resisted the arrest at any cost, but the Lord insisted that he yield and emphasized that this was his procedure for accomplishing his great work of salvation. Throughout the whole event Jesus yielded without any rancor to the handling by the soldiers, and to the limitations imposed by his trials. When accused falsely, he calmly faced his accusers in silence. The whole procedure was so obviously inspired by envy and jealousy that Pilate sought to free him, but the chief priests agitated the mob to demand his death.

What do you do when you worship anything? What is an idol? How could I know that worshipping an idol is wrong? How does the character of what I worship affect my consciousness? What effect could be expected in my personality if I worshiped several idols? How can the worship of money distort a man's sense of values? What evidence is there that money was an idol to Judas? Describe a situation in which a man addicted to an evil habit could act very much the same as Judas did?

2. Denied by Peter

Mark 14:66-72

The last days of Jesus of Nazareth in his earthly life were filled with many and varied significant

happenings, but probably none was more pathetic than Peter's denials on the night of Jesus' arrest. Peter had openly insisted that he would personally be true in his commitment to follow Jesus no matter what the circumstances might be, and Jesus had just as plainly predicted that before the night was over Peter would deny three times that he knew Jesus at all.

When Jesus was brought into the palace of the high priest, "Peter followed afar off." Stopping in the open courtyard he mingled with the soldiers, warming himself at their open fire. Here Peter was taken off guard by the remarks of some of those present who claimed that he belonged to the accused man's group of followers – and he denied three times with increasing intensity that he had any relationship with Jesus.

When Peter realized that he had done exactly what Jesus had predicted he would do, he went out and wept bitterly.

It is often a matter of interest that whereas Judas – who betrayed Jesus earlier on that very night – was cut off from the apostolic company because of his action, Peter – who openly denied knowing him later in that same night – was actually restored and became the leader for the first period of the Jerusalem church. Part of the explanation of this different consequence – apart from the far more terrible baseness of Judas' sin – may be that Judas in his action was designing and deliberate to gain personal advantage, whereas Peter was taken unaware and acted impulsively without any deliberate intention to forsake his Lord.

What makes a person want to act just like other people do? How do the regular members of any group tend to treat any person who acts differently? Dresses differently? Talks differently? Give some illustrations of how this drive for conformity could lead a person into conduct quite different from his upbringing. How did Peter act in trying to be accepted as one of the crowd. Do you think Peter intended to deny his Master? Explain. What would be one good rule to follow so that a Christian would not be tempted to deny his Lord?

3. Condemned by the high priest

Mark 14:61-64

When Jesus of Nazareth was arrested by the authorities, after being betrayed by Judas, he was brought to the high priest to be tried by the council on the charge of blasphemy. False witnesses could not agree on their evidence against him. Jesus held his peace, answering nothing as he was accused.

Finally, the high priest, asked him whether he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered that he was and that he would be seen "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This open declaration was at once denounced as blasphemy and Jesus was forthwith condemned to death. Immediately they began to abuse him physically as a condemned criminal.

Nothing could have more eloquently portrayed the limitations of human government. The processes of law organized to dispense justice, and carefully controlled to prevent any mistake, are none the less administered by men. Both their understanding and their integrity is liable to blemishes because of the sin of the human heart.

The Jewish authorities were so filled with envy and malice that their administration of the law was altogether evil. Claiming to act in justice, they were really exercising their hatred in condemning an innocent man for openly telling the truth. This whole event is a classic demonstration of religious bigotry and personal animosity. The general wickedness of all men which prompted the widespread rejection of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, despite all evidence was seen here in this tragic affair.

Why was there such an official as the high priest? Why would Jesus of Nazareth be brought before him and not before the Roman governor? What was the accusation against Jesus that finally brought the sentence of death upon him? Why was he brought into the Roman court before Pontius

Pirate? What was the accusation against Jesus of Nazareth that brought upon him the sentence of death from Pilate? Was Pilate fooled by the accusation of the high priest? How did the high priest manage to get Jesus crucified? Describe a situation in a local church where there could be a similar abuse of authority.

4. Delivered to death by Pirate

Mark 15:6-15

Pontius Pilate has gained notoriety above all others who were involved in the career of Jesus of Nazareth, because he was responsible, for purely personal reasons, for giving Jesus over to be crucified. Pilate was the Roman governor and had final and supreme authority over all the events of that dark day. He understood what was happening and must always be seen as responsible because he did have the final authority.

Pilate apparently was distressed to see this good man, Jesus of Nazareth, given over to death because of the personal enmity of the Jewish leaders. He tried to evade responsibility by sending Jesus to Herod's court since Jesus was considered as having his home in Galilee which was in Herod's jurisdiction.

When this maneuver did not succeed he tried offering to turn one prisoner loose, as was the public custom in which the Roman governor would make a show of good will and generosity to the Jewish people. Under the inspiration of the chief priest the crowd demanded that Barabbas be released, and that Jesus be crucified.

The Jewish leaders shrewdly insinuated that it would sound bad in Rome if Pilate spared a man who claimed to be "King of the Jews." Pilate was so ambitious in his political affairs that he yielded to the demand of the crowd and condemned Jesus to be crucified, rather than run the risk of a bad report to the home government.

Pilate remains forever as an example of the foolishness of any man who will ignore what he knows is right, because he is concerned about his own advantage.

Do you think Pilate wanted to condemn Jesus? Why did Pilate take the action he did? What frame of mind does Pilate demonstrate? How could a man be influenced to vote in a certain way even if he actually believed differently? Why did Pilate offer Barabbas as an alternative to Jesus as a prisoner to be set free? How might a student be kept from receiving a deserved honor if the selection were made by popular vote? If a Christian were excluded from some benefits because his open witness for Christ aroused popular opposition, how could he comfort his own soul?

5. Mocked by the crowd

Mark 15:16-25

Jesus of Nazareth in his death experienced the full depth of callous cruelty toward the outcast. Since he was condemned to die as a criminal the public acted according to the accepted procedures of that day. The moment the prisoner was condemned to death he was given over to the willful destructive impulses of the crowd of onlookers.

The Roman soldiers led the brutal mockery. They seized upon the accusation of his claiming to be a king, and made that the form of their cruel sport. All the world continues to be aghast at their wanton inhuman actions in putting on him a purple robe, with a crown of thorns pressed on his head and a reed put into his hands as a staff of authority. Then bowing their knees before him in mockery, they shouted derisively, "Hail, King of the Jews." All this indecent exhibition, Jesus endured silently. When they had completed all their sport, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Every sinner who accepts Christ as his personal Saviour has in mind when he reads this account. "He suffered all that for me" Throughout the history of the Christian church contemplation of these sufferings of Christ has always moved believers to deeper devotion and to fuller commitment. Many martyrs have died in joyful surrender to the will of God because they remembered how he suffered for them.

Why did the soldiers abuse Jesus of Nazareth? How did they ridicule his claim to be the Messiah? What was Jesus' attitude toward the soldiers? What sort of treatment can a Christian expect if he insists on witnessing for Jesus Christ? How may fellow workers often ridicule a Christian who confesses that he believes in prayer? How many fellow students ridicule a Christian who protests that certain conduct should not be allowed because it is not Christian? How does popular opposition to the gospel show itself in the criticism of evangelists? Why does much of the public read with such interest and malicious pleasure any news item which reflects against the integrity of the church?

6. Scorned by the crowd

Mark 15:26-33

Jesus of Nazareth suffered physical abuse at the hands of the soldiers, but there was something even worse in the unreasonable scorn heaped on him by the Jews themselves. The Roman soldiers may well have been ignorant of much that was involved, but the Jewish onlookers knew about his ministry and his testimony. That they should have scorned him as they did seems even more wanton and more cruel.

Some remembered how Jesus had taught that the body was the true temple of God, when he said that if they would destroy it (as they were now doing) he would rebuild it in three days (John 2:19). This was exactly what he was going to do but of course that was hidden from the mob.

They taunted him about coming down from the cross to save himself that they might believe in him. But this was precisely what he could not do if he was truly who he claimed to be! As the Lamb of God he would have to die, really die, in order to expiate the sins of those whom he would forgive and deliver.

The chief priests mocked him by saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." This was true, but not in the sense they meant it. It was just because he would save others from death, that he needed to die.

When they proposed that he come down from the cross in a demonstration of power so that they would have reason to believe in him, they were showing how totally ignorant they were of the plan of God. It was not that Christ would take the power in himself to do his will, but that he would yield himself into the will of his Father so that God could work his power through him.

If the people of Jerusalem knew the good that Jesus of Nazareth had done, how could they ever join in public ridicule of him?

Do you think bringing food and medicine to poor people will automatically make them responsive to the gospel in personal acceptance? Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God came unto the Jews, his own people. What happened to him (John 1:11)? Will being kind and good to people guarantee they will receive the gospel? What will be the spiritual consequences of any program of missions which primarily emphasizes material benefits and personal help?

7. Forsaken by God

Mark 15:34-37

Of all the aspects of that fateful event when the Son of God laid down his life on Calvary's cross, perhaps none is more awesome than the time of his death when it seemed that God turned away from his Son to allow him to die. It is possible that it was a foreknowledge of that awful phase of his sacrifice which pressed so heavily upon him in Gethsemane. There he sweat as it were great drops of blood as he endured the anguish of what would happen when he died for the sin and the sins of men. And now on Calvary that awful prospect became real.

Many have wondered about that loud cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For anyone who has in mind that he was made sin for us at the time he died, it will not seem so strange that God turned away from the sight: He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil." (See Habakkuk 1:13.) These words that Jesus uttered are the opening words of Psalm 22; and the fact that he expressed the agony of his soul in the words of Scripture should be significant for every believer. The soul finds the words of Scripture always the most fitting and the most proper. The more Scripture we remember the easier it will be to express ourselves in worship and prayer.

The awesome nature of this time of Jesus' death was vividly emphasized by natural phenomena. "There was a darkness over all the earth" for the space of three hours. A mighty earthquake occurred and the veil of the Temple was rent asunder from the top to the bottom. The whole occurrence had such a profound effect upon the centurion who was present at the time, that he cried out, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Why did Jesus Christ die on Calvary? Why did not God interfere with the Crucifixion? Why did God withdraw his presence? Why did Jesus Christ let all now see his humiliation and his death? Did Jesus know he would be cruelly slain (Matthew 16:21)? How was Jesus strengthened to go through this suffering (Hebrews 12:2)?

Make a Decision

As we recount the crucifixion and death of our Saviour and Lord our hearts are filled with praise and thanksgiving to God for what he did for us.

It would be well for us as Christians to go through the Bible ever so frequently and reread the account of Christ's coming, his dying and his rising again for us (as well as his coming again for us) and to mark in the margins of our Bibles that he did all this for us. "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He Came Through in Complete Victory

Bible reading for this week: Luke 24:1-35

Jesus of Nazareth was the incarnate Son of God who had come into the world to deliver the people of God from their sins. He would accomplish this glorious work through himself. He would identify himself with the sinners by taking on him "the seed of Abraham" and offer himself willingly as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for the remission of sins.

But God raised him from the dead!

"Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes." When Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead in newness of life that he might ascend into the very presence of God, he opened the way for "whosoever will" to come into God's presence.

1. Joseph put his body in the tomb

Mark 15:42-46

The tragic story of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth moves in deeper gloom and suffering until he gave up the ghost after the whole land had been in darkness for three hours. But from the moment he died events of a different kind occurred.

Joseph of Arimathaea, a wealthy member of the council, came boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Being satisfied that he was already dead, Pilate granted the request and the body that had been so brutally tortured to death was taken down by the loving hands of Joseph, who wrapped him in linen and carried him to his own "new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid" (John 19:41). There they rolled a stone into the door of the sepulchre, intending to come back after the Sabbath to embalm the body with spices for the permanent burial which would take place afterward.

Joseph had been a secret disciple, who had hesitated to declare his faith openly for fear of the Jews. He was a good and a just man ("the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them"). Now that the rejection of Jesus had resulted in this violent death, Joseph comes forward in his own integrity to openly confess his personal commitment to Jesus of Nazareth. Only heaven will record how this bold action by Joseph would appear to the heavenly Father who saw his beloved Son "despised and rejected of men!" It was no priest, no officer of the Temple, no high priest, no governor but a layman who had cringed before the hostility of an angry majority, who now stepped forward in all the simple majesty of personal conviction to ask boldly that he be allowed to honor this dead body with loving care. This most noble tribute of sincere devotion, made in such humble fashion, was made the closing item of the eternal record of that dark day.

Under what situations might a man want to omit witnessing for Christ?

If a man did not openly confess that he believed the Bible, would this mean that the man was unreliable? Explain. Why is it so hard to speak up on behalf of a person, when all the important people are against him? When all the leaders agreed to condemn and abuse Jesus of Nazareth, what could have been in Joseph's mind and heart when he came to bury Jesus? How is the action of Joseph like that of a college student who protests in class against unfair handling of the Christian message?

2. The women found the grave open

Mark 16:1-4

In his ministry Jesus of Nazareth brought special blessing to some women, of whom Mary Magdalene was perhaps the most notorious. It was said of her: "out of whom went seven devils." At the time when Judas had betrayed Jesus, Peter had denied knowing him, and all the disciples had fled, it was a small company of faithful women who stood watching the end. Then when Joseph had tenderly laid Jesus' body in his new sepulchre, it was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James who "beheld where he was laid."

"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." Coming "very early in the morning" they came to the sepulchre wondering how they would be able to get to the body because of the "very great" stone which had been rolled to close the door. "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away."

In this simple eloquent account are shown two great precious truths. Many reservations are often expressed about the significance of women among the followers of the Lord. It fell to the lot of Mary Magdalene, herself perhaps one of the least, to manifest to the whole world and before heaven itself, that the love of women moved her to be among the last at the cross and the first at the open grave. Humbly but sincerely their devotion shines brightly after the sunset and before the dawn.

What the women could not have done for themselves was already done by the gracious power of God. They could not have moved the stone, but when they arrived the stone was gone! How kind is Almighty God! The greatest event in the history of the world had taken place, but the infinite God could arrange help for these humble women!

How are love and devotion seen in the women who came to anoint Jesus' body for the burying? What does the time of their coming signify? How would the thought of the great stone have affected some people who might have thought of attending to this service? Why did the realization of the problem of the stone not discourage these women from coming? How would they likely interpret the fact that the stone was rolled away? What aspects of the rolling away of this stone can you note that would make this appear as a work of God? What lesson can one learn about possible hindrance being in the way of serving the Lord?

3. "He is risen; he is not here"

Mark 16:5-8

The life of Jesus of Nazareth was marked from beginning to end with moments when the other world of the heavenlies seemed to overlap so as to appear among the affairs of this world. Despite the unusual happenings that accompanied his last days on earth, the crucifixion and burial of Jesus had followed a normal pattern. That the women would come in that early morning after the Sabbath to embalm his body would be the usual procedure.

From the moment they entered the sepulchre other things happened. They were met by a young man, clothed in a long white garment, who quietly informed them in their terror that Jesus was gone: "He is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him." Then there was given them a message to "his disciples and Peter" that Jesus would meet them in Galilee, as he had previously told them he would do. "And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid."

Despite all his teaching, and his telling them what would happen, the whole event was so incredible they were reluctant to tell anyone what they had seen. John tells somewhat more of the story, how

Mary Magdalene lingering near the sepulchre in tears met the risen Jesus, but did not recognize him! When he had revealed himself to her he repeated his message to his "brethren" which she brought to the apostolic company.

What a revelation of the meekness of heavenly majesty! The messenger who was sent with such glorious news was one of the least!

Sin and death were conquered! Christ could have laughed a victory laugh, and perhaps he did. But this is not how he revealed himself to Mary. Rather, he spoke words to comfort to a fearful heart.

List at least three reasons you can advance for believing that angels are persons. What would be some of the results from having a young man announce that Jesus was risen? Why did he ask them to come in and "behold the place where they laid him"? What impression would it make on the disciples to see that the angel knew about the conversation between the disciples and their lord? Why did the disciples flee from the sepulchre and then keep quiet about the whole affair? Why does any evidence about the present existence and activities of the Lord Jesus Christ arouse apprehension and fear?

4. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene

Mark 16:9-11

Jesus of Nazareth lived his life on earth in complete and total obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. Every act in every moment was undertaken as he was led.

Every detail of every aspect of his trial, his crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection was controlled action. Thus his appearing first to Mary Magdalene was not at all a matter of chance. She had no way of knowing when she lingered to the last at his burial, and hastened as the first to his open tomb, that she would be given the honor of bringing the news of his resurrection to his disciples. But he knew, and this was the will of his Father.

Weeping in forlorn grief at the empty tomb, unwilling to depart from the spot where she had last seen him, she stooped to gaze again at the place where his body had been laid. When the angels asked her what she was weeping about, she cried out the anguish of her heart, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Turning away in her grief, she was confronted by Jesus but did not recognize him. She supposed this was the gardener and so she asked him to show her whither he had carried the body that she might "take him away." Love admits no hindrance: grief-stricken love could not see the impossibility of such action. She could not have carried him away, but her broken heart was willing to attempt anything for him.

Then in the tenderest tone recorded in history he spoke her name – "Mary." Instantly she turned to him with "Rabboni!" (which means "My Master!"). Allowing no time for further fellowship he sent her to his disciples. But her message seemed to them as idle tales, they could not believe her.

List at least three persons to whom one could have expected he would appear in person after his resurrection. How can we be guided by the first thing Mary Magdalene did after she had seen the Lord? When Mary Magdalene went out to give her testimony that she had seen the lord alive, to whom did she go? How did those grief-stricken disciples respond to this testimony? Why did they doubt her? list some of the ways in which Mary Magdalene's testimony was actually similar to preaching.

5. He appeared to two disciples on a country road

Mark 16:12, 13

Later in that same fateful day of the Resurrection "he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." Luke tells us the story in fuller detail (see Luke 24:13-35).

These two disciples were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus after the long exciting day, and they were apparently distressed about all the strange things they had heard. It had been commonly reported that the grave was empty, the body was gone, and it had been said Jesus had been seen. But this was just too incredible to be accepted as true. Yet it was all very frustrating and unsettling.

Jesus himself drew near to these two and began conversation. They did not recognize him but afterward they remembered how their hearts burned within them as he talked, expounding the Scriptures. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was far more significant than simply the physical wonder of the event. It had meaning in the gospel of God. The flesh must die and must be raised from the dead in newness of life by the power of God. What was done with Jesus as "first fruits" was to be the route whereby men could and would be saved. The flesh must die that the new man could be resurrected.

Apparently all the rejection, the suffering, was related to the dying – just as all the blessing of God and the joy of communion would be related to the living in the Lord.

When the two disciples, together with Jesus, came to their home, he made as though he would have gone further! "Abide with us" was the invitation, and he did! Without realizing the glory, these disciples had asked only for more of the blessing. But when they brought his presence into their home, their dwelling place, the further revelation was made! Sorrow was turned into joy! Weariness was gone!! Back to Jerusalem to share the glorious truth!!!

What was different about the actions of Christ Jesus after he rose from the dead? Draw at least three lessons from the fact that after he rose from the dead he showed himself in his resurrected form only to believers. At what times did he appear? In what place or places did he appear? What one truth did he seem anxious to establish when he met his disciples?

6. He appeared in the upper room

Mark 16:14-18

Before the resurrection day was ended, Jesus appeared to the apostles as they were gathered in the upper room behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Different individuals had reported their experiences, but the group could not believe what they heard. Suddenly he appeared among them, to their utter amazement.

Luke gives the most careful account of the details by which Jesus demonstrated the reality of his actual body. The disciples were so shaken by what they saw they could not believe their own eyes! They supposed they were seeing a ghost, an apparition of some sort.

He asked for food and then ate some before their eyes. He had challenged them to handle his hands and feet so they might feel his flesh and bones. When he ate a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb he provided them with evidence that could not be explained away! A ghost would not eat fish! Such "infallible" evidence established the most amazing fact in all the world! The body of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

It may help some to note the evidence that the resurrection body was not made of the same elements as his flesh had been. In the resurrection body he appeared and disappeared at will, and could enter a locked room. Nothing like this was ever recorded during his earthly career, with the possible exception of the occurrence on the Mount of Transfiguration.

When the risen Lord explained the meaning of the resurrection to his disciples (Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:44-48), he turned to the Old Testament Scriptures. The real meaning is set forth in the promises of God.

What activity could be looked for among believers? Is the Lord willing to accept doubt when his disciples hear his Word? Where does the Lord send his disciples in their teaching program? How significant is the preaching of the gospel? What sort of credentials will be made public as his followers carry out the mission entrusted to them? How important is believing that the body of Jesus Christ was actually raised from the dead (Romans 10:9)? What was the risen Lord's response to Thomas' expression of belief in the risen Christ (John 20:29)?

7. He was received up into heaven

Mark 16:19, 20

The earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth began with the virgin birth and ends with the Ascension forty days after the Resurrection. There is no way to know fully about Jesus Christ unless one begins by listening to Gabriel and ends by listening to the two men in white apparel, who told the astonished disciples, "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The very fact that the Ascension took place in full view of the whole company of the disciples implies there is truth here that should be known and appreciated. It was not merely a matter of his going into heaven. In his resurrection body he could have gone to heaven without any human eye beholding. But this was not the plan. He was taken up into heaven in full view of the disciples so that it would be known by believers living in this world that the other world is real and that the resurrected body of Jesus was taken up into it.

Christians are to know for sure that heaven is real. And they are to look forward to their own resurrection when they will go to meet their Lord in the air and so forever be with the Lord.

The salvation work of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, will bring all who believe in him into the presence of God to be like him and to be with him forever in glory. Amen!

What truth is impressed on your mind when you consider that the life of Jesus began, being heralded by Gabriel and conceived in a virgin by the Holy Ghost, and ended by his ascension into heaven? When you read about the Ascension where do you think Jesus Christ is now? What is the Lord doing now in heaven? Can he have direct relation, person to person, with any believer?

How would the conviction about Christ Jesus being in glory with the Father affect a man's preaching?

How would the living lord work with his disciples as they witnessed around the world? How is the preaching of the Word authenticated before the eyes of the world? Why did the lord Jesus send his disciples to evangelize the whole world? Who can evangelize the world – only preachers and missionaries? How could you do the work of an evangelist in your office, your home, your school or on the college campus?

Make a Decision

"He is not here, he is risen as he said," are the words spoken by the angel to the women at the tomb that first resurrection day.

Now mankind need not fear death. God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its victory.

Now because he lives all who know him in their hearts shall live also. We shall live here and now, in our daily lives, in the resurrection power. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Is this real for you?

Books for Further Study

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