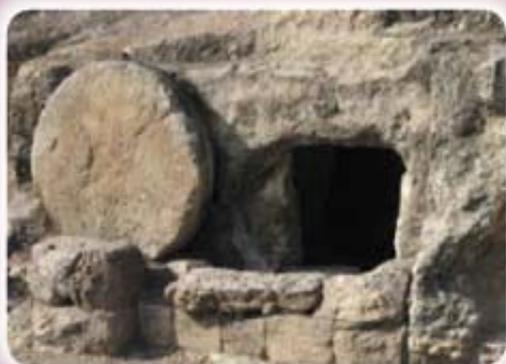


It's All About Jesus



**He Was Who
He Said He Was**

DICKSON

It's All About Jesus

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Introduction

When Jesus was in His final day with His apostles, He made a very important promise that should alert us concerning one very important fact concerning the purpose of all revelation from God to man. He promised the apostles that when “*the Spirit of truth has come ... He will glorify Me ...*” (Jn 16:13,14). He drove His point home with the statement concerning the work of the Spirit of truth, “*All things that the Father has are Mine*” (Jn 16:15).

Some people are misled by their view of the work of the Holy Spirit, and the purpose for which we have the Bible in our hands today. The Bible is not primarily about the Holy Spirit. It is not about the nation of Israel. It was not given for misguided prognosticators to search through prophecies concerning the end of times. The Bible is about Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was about Jesus. The word of the Holy Spirit to counsel the apostles was about declaring all things to the apostles that the Spirit had received from Jesus (Jn 16:13). The Bible is about Jesus.

We would assuredly conclude that the Bible is not about us. It is first about Jesus. We as the church of Christ are only the serendipity of the Spirit’s glorification of Jesus through the truth that was revealed through the apostles. Therefore, what the writers of Scripture wrote in order to reveal the will of God, was to the glory of Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, therefore, the entire sixty-

six books of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit in order to focus our minds of on the incarnational Son of God who came into the world to take from this world those who have faith in Him.

Too many have marginalized Jesus by missing the focus of the Bible. If we would obsess over prophecy in reference to us, we will miss the purpose for which the Holy Spirit inspired Holy Scripture. If in our hard times, and dysfunctional behavior, would use the Bible as only a text book for better living, we will read past Jesus. If we would use the Bible as only a history book of civilization, we will reduce Jesus to a good historical religion leader who had a message only for His generation. If we use the Bible as a legal document of law in order to believe that which is right, and win debates over that which is error, then Jesus will become only a historical figure to delivered prooftexts for our theological debates. If our objective in studying the Bible is not first to know Jesus the Son of God, we will have a limited understanding of the entire text of the Bible.

But if we get our priorities right by seeking first information about the incarnate Son of God, then our whole motivation for Bible study changes. We will start using Jesus as the standard by which we would discover and apply all Bible teaching. This is when we start allowing what Paul said to Titus: “*For the grace [gospel] of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us ...*” (Ti 2:11,12). When we put the gospel of

grace that appeared through Jesus Christ above all else, then we are ready to be taught to live the gospel. We begin to learn how to stand in the gospel as Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *“I declare to you the gospel ... in which you stand”* (1 Co 15:15). It is then that we understand what Paul wrote to the Philippians: *“Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ”* (Ph 1:27). Gospel living can exist in our lives only when we put

Jesus first in all things, including our understanding of the Bible.

Putting Jesus first, therefore, becomes the hermeneutic of our Bible study. He becomes the compass of our living, and destiny of our souls. The Holy Spirit would exhort us with the following words: *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”* (Cl 3:17).

Chapter 1

JESUS IS IMMANUEL!

Knowing Jesus begins with knowing who He is and what He does for us. Once we know who He is, and what He is presently doing on our behalf, it is then that we are motivated in our hearts to conform to what He wills in our lives.

The Old Testament is our first “dictionary” to consult in order to understand who Jesus is. There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament in reference to the Messiah and the events that would surround His gospel invasion into the world and ascension to the throne of God. Of all the prophecies that are made in the Old Testament, there are some key prophecies that we must not only understand, but they must be the motivation for changing our lives to conform to who He is. One of these key prophecies is Isaiah 7:14. In this prophecy, Isaiah prophesied of the birth of One who would be a sign to Israel:

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel (See Is 8:8-10).

Matthew quoted this prophecy in reference to the birth of Jesus (Mt 1:23). Though there may be some immediate historical applications of Isaiah’s prophecy in reference to times and events of his lifetime, Matthew’s quotation of the prophecy in reference to Jesus leaves no doubt that Isaiah had the Messiah in mind

when the original prophecy was made.

This prophecy became one of the prophecies of the Old Testament upon which the Jews based their expectations concerning the One who would come to redeem Israel. Many Jews, unfortunately, thought that the Messiah would be a military leader who would redeem the nation of Israel out of the hands of their oppressors, as Moses did in his day. Even to the last hours of Jesus’ ministry, and prior to His ascension, some of His closest disciples maintained this expectation (At 1:6). However, when Jesus as the Messiah initially began His ministry, He sought to instruct the people out of these misunderstandings in order that He be the sign that God was with His people. Only when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost did the disciples fully understand that Jesus was the Immanuel of God (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). There would be no national restoration of Israel. There would be only times of spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord (At 3:19).

Isaiah went on in the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 to describe the ministry of the Immanuel of God and what He would be in His relationship with the people of God:

*For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. And **the government will be upon His shoulder**. And His name will be called **Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty***

God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is 9:6).

Though there are many names in the Bible that define the incarnate Son of God and His ministry, the reference “Immanuel” defines His unique relationship with the people. Other references to the Messiah emphasize the function of Jesus on earth, as well as in heaven at this time. But the Son of God as Immanuel was a sign that God was on earth with His people. If we are allowed to use the name “Immanuel” in the manner of an acrostic (using each letter to stand for a truth), then we would come up with the following suggested identity and function of Jesus as the sign, or ministry, of God with His people:

I mage
M an
M essiah
A dvocate
N ame
U nderstanding
E xample
L ight

A. Image:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God in the spirit who revealed to us in the flesh the God from whom He came.

When Paul stood before idolaters in Athens, he explained that “*we are the offspring of God*” (At 17:29). However, being the offspring of God did not mean that “*The Divine Nature is like unto gold*

or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man” (At 17:29). On the contrary, if we would imagine God to be as we are in the flesh, then we would be idolaters. If one would create an image in his mind that God is as the physical image of man, then Paul would say to this idolater, “*And the times of this ignorance God has overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent*” (At 17:30).

One must repent of his childish ignorance of imagining God to be in the physical image of man. Those who would change “*the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man,*” are doing what Paul later explained, “*Professing to be wise, they became fools*” (Rm 1:22,23). It is important to put away from our minds imaginations that materialize God the Father who is spirit (Jn 4:24). We must repent of this thinking, because the more we conceive in our minds that God in heaven is physical, the less we understand the incarnational revelation of God through Jesus in the flesh.

We must not reverse the incarnation of God by creating a god in our minds after our own physical image. It was God in the spirit (Jn 4:24) who incarnated into the flesh of man in order to reveal who He is (Jn 1:14). If the Son of God were already in the flesh before the incarnation, as some envision Him to have been, **then there would have been no incarnation.** Such imagery is a denial of the gospel. It is idolatry.

Isaiah explained that the Immanuel would be an indication of “God with us”

(Is 8:10). In order for God in the spirit to be with man in the flesh, there had to be an incarnation. During His ministry, Jesus proclaimed, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9). The meaning of this statement is as Jesus explained, “*I and My Father are one*” (Jn 10:30). Of course the Father was not in the physical image of Jesus after the incarnation, and at the time Jesus made these statements. Paul wrote later that Jesus “*is the image of God*” (2 Co 4:4). If the physical image of Jesus during His earthly ministry supposedly identified God the Father in the same physical image when Jesus walked on this earth, **then the transformation of the Son of God through incarnation would be denied.**

The core of God’s work to be with His people through the gospel began with the incarnation. John explained, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (Jn 1:1,2). John then emphatically stated, “***And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us***” (Jn 1:14). Since the Word was with God in spirit in eternity, He was made through incarnation into the flesh of man while on earth. The Immanuel of God would be God with us in the flesh, and thus, Jesus as Immanuel, was the revelation of the spiritual image of God who indwelt Jesus in the flesh. Jesus, as the Immanuel of God was a spiritual expression of God in order that we, through Jesus, relate to God in the Spirit. The incarnation, therefore, was God reaching out to us through Jesus in order that we have a salvational relationship with Him. In this way, God was with

us during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

B. Man:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the incarnation of God who seeks to have a relationship with man.

In order for God to relate with us, God the Son of necessity had to give up being in the spirit form of God in order to be made in the likeness of those with whom He would establish an eternal relationship (Ph 2:6,7). God the Son in the spirit (Jn 4:24), thus became God in the flesh in order to dwell among us (Jn 1:14). So in the beginning before all was created, the Word (Immanuel) was with God, “*and the Word was God*” (Jn 1:1). But after the incarnation, and when the early disciples were with Jesus, they experienced through Jesus the person of God.

It was in the spiritual image of God that God dwelt among men in the flesh of Jesus. The Son of God was “*made in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:7). His body was the vehicle by which God moved among men. While incarnate in the flesh of a man, He could be tempted with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (See Mt 4:1-17; 1 Jn 2:16). He was moved with compassion (Mt 14:14). He felt the frustration of being rejected by the Jews to whom He had come with a message of redemption from law (Jn 1:11; see Is 53). He was one who could be exceedingly sorrowful for the condition of mankind (Mt 9:36; 23:37; Mk 8:2).

As the Immanuel, Jesus was not

only made in the physical body of man, but also made after the emotional psychology of men. He could feel as we feel, and thus have sympathy for our predicament in the flesh. His response to life in the company of people revealed how God identified with humanity. In order that God truly be with His people, He had to come in the totality of who man is, but at the same time, and in some way, not give up His deity. He emptied Himself of the spirit form of God in order to be made in the physical form of man.

C. Messiah:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the fulfillment of all prophecies that were related to the coming of the One who would spiritually lead Israel as Moses led God's people physically from Egyptian bondage.

The Messiah was the One many Jews anticipated to be the coming redeemer of Israel. The Greek word that is used in reference to the Messiah is the word "Christ."

For centuries, the Jews were waiting for the fulfillment of the promised Deliverer who would be like unto Moses (See Dt 18:15-18). For many, the anticipation for His coming came to a peak during the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. At the time, Israel was under the oppression of the Roman Empire. But King Herod—Rome's appointed King of the Jews—was fearful of this coming King. He knew the prophecies of the Messiah and believed that the Messianic King had been born in Bethlehem. He

subsequently killed all the children two years of age and under in order to eliminate any assumed competition for the power of his sons who would succeed him (Mt 2:16-18).

Rumors concerning the events of the birth of Jesus spread throughout Palestine. And then about thirty years after the birth of Jesus, came the ministry of John the Baptist. At the time of John's ministry, the anticipation for the Messiah was so great that some assumed that even John could be the Messiah. But John answered their confusion, "*I am not the Christ [Messiah]*" (Jn 1:20). John explained, "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said*" (Jn 1:23).

Then there were those disciples who were so anxious for the coming of the Messiah that upon the basis of the initial proclamations of Jesus as the Messiah, they willingly believed that Jesus was the One. Philip was one of those anxious individuals. After briefly encountering Jesus, Philip ran to his brother, Simon (Peter), and said, "*We have found the Messiah*" (Jn 1:41). The proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah touched the hearts of the initial disciples of Jesus. They believed on the basis of John's simple proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah (See Jn 1:43-51).

And indeed Jesus was the Messiah who had come. When Jesus was with a Samaritan woman, even she revealed the expectation of the Samaritans concerning the coming of the Messiah. She said to Jesus, "*I know that Messiah is com-*

ing (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things” (Jn 4:25). Jesus answered, “I who speak to You **am He**” (Jn 4:26).

As the Jews looked for and expected the coming of the Messiah, with the same expectation we too look for His coming again at the end of time. Immediately after His ascension, two angels stood by the disciples and promised, “This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in like manner as you have watched Him go into heaven” (At 1:11). Therefore, “we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pt 3:13).

D. Advocate:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God who seeks to work continually on our behalf in reference to our problem of sin.

It may be that we view lawyers with some distaste, but when we speak of Jesus as our lawyer, we want to give Him a hug. Jesus is the lawyer (advocate) who pleads for our case. He not only pled our case on the cross that we be justified of all our crimes (sins) against God, He also took those sins upon Himself that we be judged righteous before God (1 Pt 2:24). John reminds all Christians, “My little children, these things I write to you so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, **we have a Counselor** [advocate] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn 2:1).

Jesus continually acts on the behalf

of those who have given themselves to Him through obedience to the gospel. His function as our advocate was activated at the cross. “Therefore, He is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God through Him, **seeing He always lives to make intercession for them**” (Hb 7:25). The Hebrew writer reminds us that our Advocate appears “in the presence of God for us” (Hb 9:24). The emphasis of this statement is not to make God seem distant from us. On the contrary, the Hebrew writer wanted to metaphorically associate the Father and our Advocate in close contact with one another on our behalf. In other words, “We have such a high priest **who is seated at the right hand** of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hb 8:1).

We must never forget, therefore, what Paul reminded Timothy: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**” (1 Tm 2:5). It is this Christ (Messiah) “who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rm 8:34).

E. Name:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of God with us who now has all authority in heaven and on earth.

The appeal of the gospel to all people was stated by Paul in Philippians 2: “Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the **name** that is above every name, that at the **name** of Jesus **every knee should bow**” (Ph 2:9,10).

The word “name” refers to author-

ity. It is in this time of history that all authority has been given unto Jesus who reigns over all things (Mt 28:18; Ph 2:9-11). The Father raised up Jesus to be “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named*” (Ep 1:21). Therefore, “*there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (At 4:12). And for this reason, everyone in this dispensation of time who would be saved, must obey the gospel in the name of Jesus (At 2:38).

All baptized believers now live under the influence of the gospel because of their obedience to the word of Christ (Jn 12:48). Paul therefore exhorted, “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Cl 3:17). Paul also reminded the Philippians, “*Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ [the Messiah]*” (Ph 1:27). In living the gospel, Christians must strive “*together for the faith of the gospel*” (Ph 1:27). In doing this, they are living according to the name (authority) of Jesus.

F. Understanding:

Jesus as the Immanuel was the revelation of the heart of God in order to draw all men unto the gospel.

Following the third century, one of the great theological misunderstandings concerning the function of Jesus was that He ascended so far away from the Christian that another intermediary was necessary in order to make contact with Him.

Misguided theologians subsequently made Mary, the mother of Jesus, the new intercessor on behalf of the saints. Some recent exaltations of Mary are “that the Virgin [Mary] intercedes for us in heaven and that her intercession is so universal that every grace passes through her hands” (Paul H. Hallet, *What is a Catholic*, p. 77). Since Mary is supposed to intercede on behalf of the saints, we “may also pray to the Blessed Virgin ...” (William J. Cogan, *A Catechism for Adults*, p 16).

But the preceding is not what is taught concerning the relationship that Jesus now has with His people. The preceding teaching was indirectly making its way into the thinking of the disciples even by the time the book of Hebrews was written. The substitute for Jesus was not Mary. Some Christians, however, were reverting to the intermediary function of the Levitical priesthood. For this reason, the Hebrew writer made the following reassuring statement concerning the relationship that Jesus, as “God with us,” was with all His disciples: “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hb 4:15).

Because we personally have a high priest who shows empathy toward us, the Hebrew writer wanted to embolden us to approach unto the throne of grace directly through Jesus: “*Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hb 4:16). We have direct access to Jesus because He partook

of the same environment of temptation in which we live. He was “*tempted as we are,*” and thus, He understands our predicament in this world. Add to this the encouragement of Paul, “*For through Him [Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father*” (Ep 2:18).

On earth, Jesus was personally with His disciples in order that God have a personal relationship with His people. Because He personally in the body ascended out of their presence (At 1:11), this does not mean that He discontinued His relationship with His disciples. He is not personally with us at this time in bodily form, but we are assured that He will be personally with us in bodily form when He comes again (At 1:11; 1 Jn 3:2). It is for the restoration of his personal relationship that we yearn.

The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was that the Immanuel (“God with us”) would be comforting to those who accepted Him as the Savior of the world. Any theology that would teach that Jesus is distant from us is an attack against the very purpose for which God intended the incarnational Son of God would be in His relationship with us. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, He went away bodily, but not in presence spiritually. He only assumed another function of being that would draw us closer to the Father by drawing us closer to Him. He understands our predicament of life because He continually relates to our suffering, though He is not personally with us at this time as He was with the early disciples.

G. Example:

Jesus as the Immanuel revealed to the people of God a relational behavior by which we can live in response to the gospel.

Though the Jews had a nationalistic concept concerning the coming of the Messiah, there was still the need for the incarnation. They erroneously believed that the Messiah would come in order to deliver them from their oppressors. But they had a limited concept concerning the origin and purpose of this Messiah. According to their beliefs, the Messiah would simply be a man born of a woman who would rise to prominence among the Jews just as Moses. Their understanding that this Messiah would actually be an incarnation of God was not in their thinking. It was a mystery that was kept from the minds of men until He was revealed and experience (Ep 3:3-5; 1 Pt 1:10-12).

When Jesus said, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father,*” God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit knew that we needed a living example to usher us through this world. We needed more than a good religious leader who was born to a carpenter of Nazareth, and then would pronounce theological dictates to the people. We needed an incarnate God who would give us the purest form of discipleship that would be the model for all men. Therefore, Jesus’ statement of John 13:15 reveals the example of what gospel living demands: “*For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.*”

When Jesus made this statement, He, as the incarnate Son of God, had just washed the feet of the disciples. These were the same disciples who considered Him to be their Lord and Teacher (Jn 13:13). So Jesus said to them, *“If I then, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet”* (Jn 13:14). We are now at the table as invited guests, and it is Jesus the Messiah who led by giving us examples of service (See Mk 10:44,45; Lk 22:27). As His disciples, we must do likewise.

Jesus’ washing of the feet of the disciples in the John 13 context, therefore, is quite incomprehensible. He was the Creator of the dirty feet He washed (Cl 1:16). And yet, He as the Creator was on His knees washing the feet of man. This example of servanthood surpasses any example that man could possibly give for others to follow. If God can wash our dirty feet, then we have no excuse whatsoever not to serve others as He served us.

H. Light:

Jesus as the Immanuel revealed the way out of the darkness of this world into the light of the realm of God’s existence.

Jesus proclaimed to the multitudes, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (Jn 8:12).

These words were John’s quotation of what Jesus affirmed during His earthly ministry. But the Holy Spirit was not finished with this concept about who the Son of God was among us. Concerning His last revelation of Jesus as the light, the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”* (1 Jn 1:7). *“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”* (1 Jn 1:5). The light is where all of us want to be. We seek to escape from the darkness of this world in order to walk in the eternal light of God. It was for this reason that Jesus brought the eternal light of God into this world. We follow Him as the light, therefore, in order to be led out of darkness into the eternal realm of light in the presence of God.

For those Jews of faith in the first century, the Messiah was more than what they had hoped. Not long into Jesus’ ministry, many people of faith soon discovered that *“in Him was life, and the life was the light of men”* (Jn 1:4). Jesus had come into a world of darkness, but *“the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it”* (Jn 1:5). Because God is light, anyone who would come from the presence of God must of necessity bring with Him light (1 Jn 1:5-7). And since Jesus came from God, He came as a bearer of light for all who live in the darkness of the world.

Chapter 2

JESUS IS THE CHRIST!

What the Jews did not expect was that the Messiah was destined to be crucified. For those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, what to them would be the saddest day in their lives, would later become the greatest event of all history. It would change their lives and the world forever.

All Christians today are the product of the greatest historical event that has ever occurred in human history. We must recognize that we as Christians are part of a heritage that is based on the Christ of the cross, and not on a catechism of doctrine. Christians are Christ-called people, not law-called. This was the foundation of faith that Jesus had in mind when He made the statement, “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me*” (Jn 12:32). And this was the background of Paul’s statement in Romans 6:14: “*You are not under law, but under grace.*”

Jesus did not draw us unto Himself because His teachings were better than the other religious leaders—though they were. The religions of men draw people unto their faith through religious rites, principles of behavior, and catechisms of law. But Christians are drawn by faith to the person of Jesus Christ and His atonement for our sins. This same drawing power of grace continues today.

Many religious teachers have passed through history and established great followings of people. Many people

have been drawn to these leaders because of their great teachings, and often dynamic charisma. But this was not the primary focus of Jesus in drawing people unto Himself. Jesus draws people to Himself through the atonement of the cross for their sins. We are drawn to Him because of our redemption from the bondage of sin. We desire through Him to establish a relationship with the Father. All men seek to be reconciled to the God of their faith, but they honestly know that they cannot get there on the basis of their own meritorious religious ceremonies, or isolation as monks from society. It is for this reason that when the early evangelists went forth into all the world, they did as Paul wrote, “*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” (1 Co 2:2).

In a world that seeks to be successful, to be glamorous, and in possession of the most recent electronic device, the cross calls for that which is often contrary to what we consider most important of life. The cross represents sacrifice, discipline, commitment and humility. This is the nature of the discipleship unto which Jesus calls us: “*If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me*” (Lk 9:23). Discipleship of the One who was lifted up is contrary to that which the materialistic world calls on us to do in order to be successful. Instead of lift-

ing ourselves up to be successful in a world of accomplishments, the Christ of the cross calls on us to humble ourselves before others. It is then that He will lift us up (See 1 Pt 5:6).

Since Jesus is the crucified Christ (Messiah), there are many salvational offerings of Jesus that call us to be drawn to Him. Again, we would form an acronym of the term CHRIST in order to identify some of what Jesus offers:

Crucified
Humiliated
Redemption
Intercession
Savior
Teacher

The following points define what Jesus accomplished during His past and present ministries on our behalf, which ministries were validated at the cross. These are ministries that draw us unto Him:

A. **Crucified:**

The cross meant sacrifice for our sins, and thus this was the message that went forth from Calvary into all the world. It was as Paul wrote, “***We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness***” (1 Co 1:23). This was the central message of the Suffering Servant about whom Isaiah had prophesied over six hundred years before (See Is 53:5). The Suffering Servant was all of the following:

1. **Sin offering:** Since the blood of

animals could not remit sins, it was necessary that an eternal offering be made of the incarnate body of an eternal Deity. Atonement for sin could only be accomplished through that which was eternal (Hb 10:1-4). No created animal could be sacrificed for a problem that had existed between God and man since the days of Adam and Eve. In order to solve the problem of separation from God through sin, an unblemished Lamb of God had to be made available through incarnation.

Only an eternal sacrifice on the part of God could deal with sin that had eternal consequences. “*For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us*” (2 Co 5:21). The result of the offering of the Christ resulted in the promise that God makes to everyone who obeys the gospel of the Christ: “***And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more***” (Hb 10:17). “No more” was a statement that did not refer to the yearly day of atonement under the Sinai law wherein a sacrifice was made for the sins of the people of Israel. At and after the cross, “no more” referred to eternity. There would never again be the need for a sacrifice to be made for sins. The Hebrew writer reminds us:

Who [Jesus] does not need daily as those high priests [of the Sinai covenant], to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s, for this He [Jesus] did once for all when He offered up Himself (Hb 7:27).

2. **The Passover Lamb:** The meta-

phor of the “Passover lamb” finds its root meaning during the last plague that God brought upon the Egyptians when He was delivering Israel from Egyptian captivity. The Israelites were to sprinkle animal blood on their doorpost in order that the firstborn child of the family be spared from death (See Ex 12). In order that blood be provided, a lamb had to be sacrificed. This was the Passover lamb. The offering of the Passover lamb became a yearly offering in Israel for God’s deliverance of the people from bondage.

When applied to Christ, Jesus became the sacrificial Passover lamb that was offered in order to spare us from death. Paul wrote, “*For indeed, Christ our Passover was sacrificed*” (1 Co 5:7). The prophesy of Isaiah 53:7 was fulfilled in Him: “*He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He did not open His mouth.*”

2. *The blood of the covenant:*

Animals died and blood was offered in order to sanctify the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel (Ex 24). Again, animals died in order that the Sinai covenant be ratified with Israel. In the same way, the incarnational Son of God offered His blood in order to ratify a new covenant between the God of heaven with those who would obey the gospel on earth.

During His last Passover feast with His disciples, Jesus held up a cup of the fruit of the vine and proclaimed, “*For this is My blood of the covenant that is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Mt 26:28). The Jewish disciples who

were present when Jesus made this statement did not fully understand what He was saying at the time. Nevertheless, in a few weeks after the Passover they would fully understand the concept of the “blood of the covenant.” At the time, they did understand the “blood of the covenant” that existed between God and Israel that was instituted at Mount Sinai. But a new covenant was about to be established. It was with their forefathers that blood was used to ratify a covenant with the nation of Israel. But as the disciples sat there with Jesus during His last Passover, they were wondering what was about to be when blood again would be poured out to ratify the covenant about which He spoke.

In reference to the blood offering of the Christ, every word of Frances R. Havergal’s song, *I Gave My Life for Thee*,” is true:

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might’s ransomed be,
And quickened from dead.

The crucifixion of the Christ will be realized fully when the saints stand unblemished before the throne of God with blood-washed souls. It is then that we will realize the significance of Revelation 7:14 concerning ourselves: “*These are those coming out of the great tribulation. And they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*”

So if we lack some confidence in the cleansing power of the blood, it would

be good to answer the following question that was posed by the Hebrew writer:

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hb 9:14).

B. Humiliated:

When reading of things concerning the venture of the Son of God into our realm of physical existence, we often read concepts about which we have little understanding. For example, what earthly being could ever fully understand the following statement? *“He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men”* (Ph 2:7). How could we ever, as earthbound finite beings, possibly understand that *“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word was made flesh”* (Jn 1:1,14)?

These are incomprehensible concepts for humans to understand fully. We read the words, but the words speak of God becoming flesh. This is a case in biblical interpretation when we must accept the words by faith that it actually happened. By trusting in the testimony of those who personally experienced the incarnate God, we approached the written record of their testimony in order to grow in faith.

By faith, we accept their testimony as true, for we believe the witness of those who first encountered the incarnate

Son of God. We believe the personal witness of one as John who encountered the incarnate God about whom he wrote, *“For the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and show to you that eternal life that was with the Father and was manifested to us”* (1 Jn 1:2). John said that it was this Word of life *“that we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, that we have looked upon and our hands have handled”* (1 Jn 1:1).

So to what extreme in humiliation would God go in order to come for us? The first extreme was incarnation. But what was so important that God would incarnate in the flesh for us? We incomprehensibly struggle through revelations of this divine journey as recorded in Philippians 2:5-8. As we read, our minds are overwhelmed with the humbling reality that this incarnate God would become *“obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* in order that we be with Him forever (Ph 2:8). His ultimate extreme beyond incarnation was to suffer our physical death.

It was only hours before the humiliation of the cross that the Son of God who created us (Cl 1:16) prayed to the Father who remained in spirit, *“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me”* (Lk 22:42). The cup was the humiliation and suffering of the Christ on the cross. But the cup could not be removed. It could not because of us. Our sins sent Him there. And so, from the time of the preceding agonizing prayer request, began the humiliating journey of the incarnate Son of God to the cross of death.

When we think of the humiliation of the incarnate Son of God on the cross, we must never forget that we put Him there because of our rebellion against God. Every sin that we commit caused the humiliation of the Son of God to our physical death which we fear so much (See Hb 2:14,15).

And unless we forget, it would be good to remind ourselves of the humiliation that the incarnate Son of God went through for our sins. The men who arrested the Christ “*began mocking and beating Him*” (Lk 22:63). “*They spit on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head again and again*” (Mt 27:30). “*And they stripped Him [naked] and put on Him a scarlet robe*” (Mt 27:28). They “*twisted a crown of thorns,*” and then “*they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’*” (Mt 27:29). And then they led Him away to be crucified as, and with, common criminals. And truly, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled at Calvary outside Jerusalem:

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed. (Is 53:4,5).

Once the humiliation of the physical body of the Son of God was ended,

the world would turn to humiliating His spiritual body. “*Yes and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*” (2 Tm 3:12). This should come as no surprise in our discipleship of the One who was humiliated on the cross on our behalf. When the Christ was lifted up, we were drawn to Him because He was lifted up for our sins. Peter explained, “*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps*” (1 Pt 2:21). Those who are drawn to the cross must also be willing to be drawn to His suffering.

But in the heat of humiliation, the drawn body of believers must always remember the encouraging words of Peter: “*If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you*” (1 Pt 4:14). Therefore, “*If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name*” (1 Pt 4:16). Therefore, “*blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt 5:10).

C. Ransomed:

We do not forget what all the suffering and humiliation was about in reference to our salvation. Our salvation involved being bought out of the captivity of sin. Our redemption with the price of His sacrifice finds its definition in what God did for the nation of Israel. The people of Israel were redeemed literally out of the captivity of Egypt (Ex 6:6).

They could not escape from their own bondage. Someone other than themselves had to redeem them.

In the slavery of the day of the cross, a slave of the Roman Empire could be bought out of his bondage by another. Both the children of Israel and slaves were in the same predicament in reference to bondage. Redemption had to come from somewhere outside themselves. In deliverance from the physical bondage of Israel and slaves, the metaphor “redemption” finds its earthly meaning in the bondage in which we find ourselves in sin. We could not redeem ourselves through law-keeping, for the lack thereof was what brought us into bondage. We could not keep law perfectly, and thus, we were all condemned as law-breakers (Rm 3:9,10,23). We could not atone for our sins through good works. We were thus doomed because of our own wrong doing. We were hopeless in sin, and thus, needed Someone outside ourselves to redeem us from bondage.

Paul reminded the Ephesian disciples, “*In Him [Christ] we have **redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace*” (Ep 1:7). “*Through His blood*” refers to the cross. With the sacrificial offering of the incarnate Son of God, there would have been no purchase made for those in bondage. For this reason, “*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mt 20:28). Jesus ransomed Himself in order to redeem us from that from which we could not redeem ourselves. Therefore, we “*have*

been bought with a price” (1 Co 6:20). And that price was the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God. As the Christ, Jesus paid the ransom price for our freedom from the bondage of our own sin.

D. **Intercession:**

Not only did the Christ pay the ransom price for our deliverance from the bondage of sin, He also continues to intervene for us at the right hand of God. “*For there is one God and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus***” (1 Tm 2:5). Christ “*is even at the right hand of God, **who also makes intercession for us***” (Rm 8:34). The Christ was resurrected, and subsequently, was “*seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*” (Hb 8:1). At the right hand of God “*He is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God through Him, seeing **He always lives to make intercession for them***” (Hb 7:25). In reference to the intercession ministry of the Christ, the Hebrew writer concluded with the following words of comfort:

*For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, **but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*** (Hb 9:24).

E. **Savior:**

As the Christ who intercedes for us, Jesus saves “*His people from their sins*” (Mt 1:21). The Greek word for “savior”

means “to deliver” or “to preserve.” Jesus as the Christ delivered us from the bondage of sin, and through His continual cleansing blood, preserves us unto His final coming (1 Jn 1:7).

Through His ministry of sacrifice and redemption, Jesus was proclaimed to be the Savior of the world. The Samaritans believed that Jesus was “*indeed the Savior of the world*” (Jn 4:42). From the seed of David “*God raised up for Israel a Savior, Jesus*” (At 13:23). “*He is the Savior of the body*” (Ep 5:23). Jesus Christ has appeared as the only Savior of the world (2 Tm 1:10). He is the “*Lord Christ Jesus our Savior*” (Ti 1:4). Therefore, we are all “*looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Christ Jesus*” (Ti 2:13). Therefore, only through Jesus is there salvation, for He is the only Savior who has been sent into the world to redeem us from our sins (At 4:12).

F. Teacher:

But until our Savior Christ Jesus appears, He continues to teach us through His word in order that we continue to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7). Based on what Jesus revealed during His ministry, it is imperative that we be instructed by His word.

He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day (Jn 12:48).

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry,

a certain scribe made the correct conclusion in reference to Jesus: “*Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go*” (Mt 8:19). And this should be the determination of everyone who would prepare himself until the Christ comes again. We should be willing to ask Jesus, “*Teacher, what good thing must I do so that I may have eternal life?*” (Mt 19:16). And when the Teacher replies with instructions, we must not respond as the rich young ruler who asked the preceding question. He went away sad because he could fulfill the commitment unto which Jesus called him (Mt 19:22).

The word “teacher” in reference to Jesus is used about seventy times in the New Testament. And indeed, He was a master teacher. Though the word “teacher” was used in the New Testament times to refer primarily to one who was a leader by what he taught, Jesus was identified as a leading teacher. He was identified as such, not only because of His function as a teacher in society, but also because of what He taught. As an effective communicator of His teachings, the methods of good teaching that He employed have been used throughout the world unto this day.

In order to lead the people to His desired goal, Jesus resorted to a great deal of teaching. “*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues ...*” (Mt 4:23). “*And seeing the multitudes ... He opened His mouth and taught them*” (Mt 5:1,2). At the end of His ministry, Jesus said to the multitudes, “*I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple ...*” (Mt 26:55).

In order to change the course of the faith of the Jews, Jesus taught a great deal in reference to where He was taking them. What the people were taught would determine the direction of their behavior and their acceptance of Him as the Messiah. In this way, the following are some of the teaching principles that Jesus used to lead the people to His kingship and the new world order that would fall under His kingship:

1. *Jesus was prepared to teach.*

From childhood, Jesus “*grew and became strong, filled with wisdom*” (Lk 2:40). He associated Himself at an early age with the teachers of Israel (Lk 2:46). And even at a young age “*all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers*” (Lk 2:47). So during His growing years, “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*” (Lk 2:52).

When it came time to begin His teaching ministry, Jesus was prepared (See Lk 3:23). He taught both publicly and from house to house. On many occasions the following happened: “*It came to pass on another Sabbath that He entered into the synagogue and taught*” (Lk 6:6). It would be correct to conclude that Jesus continually taught the people throughout His three and a half year ministry. We have recorded in the New Testament all the truth of His teachings, which truth was taught in different ways during His teaching ministry.

2. *Jesus taught a specific direction to which He was leading the people.* He knew that the people needed to be

taught to move in the direction that He was taking them. Generally speaking, He taught the fundamental scope of why He came into the world and where He was taking the people in order that they be able to go out of the world with Him: “*And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*” (Jn 8:32). And more specifically, He directed, “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (Jn 10:10). Therefore, we would conclude that the scope of His teaching was made in His final prayer to the Father:

And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do (Jn 17:3,4).

Jesus finished His teaching work, for the preceding statement was made **before** the cross. Therefore, throughout His teaching ministry Jesus brought the people to a knowledge of the “*only true God.*”

Jesus came from the Father, and thus, only He could teach fully concerning who the Father was. Some people who desire to be teachers are always learning, but they are “*never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tm 3:7). If one teaches something about which he knows little, it is like speaking of a place one has never visited. In order to lead people in the direction of faith in Jesus, it is imperative to lead according to the word of God. If we would have a faith

that is built on Jesus, then certainly we must know the word of Jesus (See Rm 10:17).

3. *Jesus was committed to His students:* Jesus' commitment to His students could be summed up in one statement: "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep*" (Jn 10:11). Those who have committed themselves to the word of God, of necessity must also commit themselves to the ones they teach. It is the gospel that is preached to unbelievers (Mk 16:15). But it is the word of truth that is taught to believers (2 Tm 2:2). Paul was "*appointed ... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth*" (1 Tm 2:7). He instructed that those who would desire to shepherd the flock of God, however, must be "*able to teach*" the flock (1 Tm 3:2). Those, therefore, who would be faithful leaders are exhorted with the following statement by the Holy Spirit:

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of faith and of good teaching that you have followed (1 Tm 4:6).

4. *Jesus used many methods of teaching.* He taught by using parables (Mk 12:12). He taught by asking questions that demanded a response from a questioning audience (Mt 16:13,15). He taught by being redundant in order to emphasize truths (Jn 21). He used visual aids on one occasion when He cursed a fig tree (Mk 11:20-24). He used all methods of teaching that would commu-

nicate His message to the people.

The Palestine pathways were His classroom. As He walked with His disciples, He engaged them in conversation (Mt 16). His environment of teaching was much different than that which is commonly used today. Jesus' students never sat in a classroom, nor took a final example. The general principle of His teaching was through discipleship, that is, the students watched and listened, and then enacted His teachings in their lives when He sent them out on different preaching tours (Lk 10).

Henry Adams once said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never know where his influence stops." We have no idea who wrote the following poem, but it was published in the *Christian Bible Teacher* over fifty years ago and offers an appropriate conclusion to this point:

I dreamed the pearly gates were opened wide,
And I had entered in, for I had died;
And now must give account of all my acts,
I saw a book there opened with these facts.

I thought, "My role upon the earth was small,
Just teaching a Bible school my call."
For I saw all the saints of God up there,
And mine was, at most, a meager share.

I heard the Master call for my report,
I stood afraid, for mine ... was short;
I trembled and felt I would not pass,
Then whispered, "I just taught a Bible class."

And from the throne I heard His voice, "Well done,
Come in and share eternal life, my son;
Although your place was humble and obscure,
You led the thirsty to the waters pure."

And then it seems that from eternal plains,
There came the sound of voices in refrain,
That rolled across the mighty sea of glass,
There are the great ... the teachers of a class.

When I awoke I thought of those I taught,
 And in their lives, what glory God had wrought,
 I prayed to God, and all that I could say,
 "Make me a better teacher day by day."

And you who teach this Christian way to live,
 May feel sometimes you're asked too much to give;
 But someday you will reap eternal joys,
 Because you led to Christ these girls and boys.

Chapter 3

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED!

Around thirty years after the initial proclamation that millennia of prophecy had been fulfilled in the coming of the Redeemer of mankind, a most disheartening thing began to occur with some of the first generation of believers. As national Israel neared its end in A.D. 70, the "signs of the times" began to appear over the western horizon as Rome was determined to silence forever the rebellious Jews of Palestine. In fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of the doom of Jerusalem (Mt 24), the rumbling march of Roman soldiers was heard who were on their way to the heart of Jewish patriotism, Jerusalem. The city would soon be doomed to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel that national Israel would come to a close (See Dn 12).

In Palestine, Jewish patriotism was reaching its climax. Judaism, the national religion, was revitalized in the early and mid 60s. Intimidation to the nationalism of all Jews who lived in Palestine became intense. Jews were recruited to maintain their faith in national Israel by joining in the rebellion against the foreign occupation of Rome.

On his final trip to the "mother city" of Jerusalem, Paul wanted to give a last chance to his "brethren in the flesh," his fellow Jews (See Rm 9:1-3; 10:1). He

arrived in Palestine first at the coastal city of Ceasarea. Understanding the fearlessness of Paul, and the imminent danger in Jerusalem, the Jewish disciples in Caesarea "*pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem*" (At 21:12). Nevertheless, Paul persisted in his determination to give the Jews his last efforts to believe in Jesus. He comforted the disciples in Caesarea with these words: "*What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*" (At 21:13). These were the words of a brave-hearted disciple for Jesus who had weathered the storm of persecution for two decades. However, not all the Jewish disciples at the time could make this statement. This was the problem in Judea.

When the apostle Paul eventually arrived in Jerusalem around A.D. 59, the Jewish elders of the church urged him not to do anything that would further inflame the irrational nationalism of overzealous Jews who were prevalent in the city. The elders advised Paul that he purify himself according to Jewish law, pay the temple expenses of four other men, and then enter the temple in order to make a show that he was not against Jewish customs (See At 21:17-25). But this was

to no avail because God had plans to get Paul to Rome in order to testify before Caesar concerning Christ. God wanted the world to know that Christianity was not a sect of Judaism, but was the result of His sending of the Christ for the salvation of the world (At 23:11).

Regardless of all efforts of Rome to pacify the Jewish nationalists in their insurrection against Roman occupation of Palestine, the decade of the 60s eventually culminated with the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel in A.D. 70. Leading up to this date, the decade of the 60s was a time of intimidation for formerly converted Jews. Their fellow unbelieving Jews sought to intimidate believing Jesus away from Jesus in order that they return to the religion of their forefathers. As a result, some Jewish Christians in Palestine were forsaking Christ in order to return to the Sinai law. The letter of Hebrews was written in order to combat this apostasy. Hebrews 6:4-6 is one of the most disheartening passages that ever came forth from the pen of an inspired writer:

*For it is impossible for those **who were once enlightened**, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakes of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **if they fall away**, to renew them again to repentance, **since they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.***

The apostasy that was taking place at the time this statement was made oc-

curred because there were those who were not willing, as Paul, “*to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*” (At 21:13). Regardless of any individual reasons for forsaking Jesus in order to conform to a dead law, and particularly to a religion that was based on the traditions of the fathers (Mk 7:1-9), one can still crucify Jesus today. Modern-day crucifixion of Jesus continues when individuals “crucify to themselves the Son of God” with those sins that originally led to the crucifixion of Jesus in the first century.

A. Ignorance crucified Christ.

Jesus suffered on the cross as a result of the ignorance of the people. It was as said by Goethe: “There is no more terrible sight than ignorance in action.” Those who crucified Jesus really did not believe that He was the incarnation of God. It is the same problem that exists throughout the world today. In His final moments on the cross, Jesus requested of the Father on behalf of those who crucified Him, “*Father, forgive them, **for they do not know what they are doing***” (Lk 23:34).

When antagonistic persecutors were picking up stones to martyr Stephen, Stephen said almost the same words: “*Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge*” (At 7:60). It was a time again when, because of ignorance, people were opposing the way of righteousness. If those who drove the nails into the hands of Jesus, or lifted stones to hurl against Stephen, actually knew that Jesus was the

Son of God, things would have been different. They would have been different, but not for our benefit. And thus, God used the ignorance of religiously misguided people to bring about the redemption of those who would later understand.

Not long after the cross and resurrection, Peter was apologetic for the people who crucified Jesus. *“And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers”* (At 3:17). In his former years, Paul (Saul) was one of those rulers who reacted out of ignorance to persecute all those who believed that Jesus was the Son of God. However, this changed when Jesus finally slapped him off his horse on his way to Damascus to imprison Christians. Paul wrote many years later of his former behavior, *“I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Tm 1:13).

Under the Sinai law there was a provision for those who sinned “unintentionally” (Nm 15:27-29). But those who nailed Jesus to the cross intentionally crucified Him because of their willful ignorance. They were as their forefathers against whom God pronounced destruction because they willfully forgot the word of God (Hs 4:6). By the time Jesus arrived, all the prophecies concerning the Messiah had already been made. They had been fulfilled by the time of His ascension (See Lk 24:44). But because of the hardness of the hearts of many of the religious leaders of the day, most could not connect all the dots of prophecy with fulfillment in order to conclude that Jesus

was the One for whom the Jews had hoped for centuries.

And then we consider those today who willfully remain in ignorance of Jesus as the Son of God. They are without excuse, for they not only have all the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus as the Redeemer, but they also have the New Testament that is a record of the fulfillment of the prophecies. John’s record of the gospel alone is enough to produce the belief that is necessary to accept Jesus as the Christ. John wrote,

And Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name (Jn 20:30,31).

The Holy Spirit has given all the proof necessary that is required to move one unto obedience of the gospel. It is today similar to the situation about which the Hebrew writer wrote concerning some in the first century: *“For if we sin willfully after we have receive the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”* (Hb 10:26). There are some who willfully forget (2 Pt 3:5). There are others who have no love for the truth of the gospel (2 Th 2:10-12). But it is now as Paul said to his audience in Athens, *“And the times of this ignorance God has overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent”* (At 17:30).

We must not allow ignorance to lure

us into complacency. If we do, then Peter's exhortation of 2 Peter 3:5,7 is a warning of coming things that will come upon us as a thief in the night:

For this they willfully forget But the heavens and the earth that are now, are reserved by the same word, reserved for the fire until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

B. Envy crucified Christ.

When it came to the final hours of Jesus' ministry, and prior to His crucifixion, Matthew recorded the true motives of the religious leaders. Even the unbelieving Pilate to whom the religious leaders delivered Jesus, knew their motives: "*For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him because of envy*" (Mk 15:10; see Mt 27:18). The situation at the time of the crucifixion was as it was when Paul stood before resistant Jews in Antioch of Pisidia: "*But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. And contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed those things that were spoken by Paul*" (At 13:45). The religious leaders of the day behaved as was stated by Aeschylus: "No man is a complete failure until he begins disliking men who succeed."

If the multitudes believed that Jesus was truly the Messiah, then the bank accounts of the religious leadership would be emptied. The Sinai law would be nailed to the cross, and thus the obligation of the people to contribute to the priests would be nullified (Cl 2:14). In

order not to send their "stock market" into a crash, the priests and Pharisees knew that Jesus had to go.

Paul identified envy as a work of the flesh (Gl 5:21; see 1 Tm 6:4; Ti 3:3). It was because of this work of the flesh that Joseph's brothers sold him into captivity (Gn 37:11). These brothers allowed envy to destroy their love for their own brother, for their envy overpowered their love (See 1 Co 13:4). Even out of envy some preached Christ in Rome in order to stir up animosity against Paul (Ph 1:15). Envy is the motivation for doing all sorts of evil things in order to accomplish one's own selfish goals (Js 3:14). Because the religious leaders of Jesus' day envied Him, they were moved with evil motives to have Him removed from their midst.

We can be sure of one thing in reference to the attitude of envy. Where there is envy, there is always confusion and the implementation of evil works. James concluded, "*For where envy and strife exist, there is confusion and every evil work*" (Js 3:16). Envy produced an evil work by sending Jesus to the cross. It will do the same today.

C. Greed crucified Christ.

Greed is covetousness, or the love of having money. It is true what Paul wrote to a preacher, "*For the love of money is the root of all evils, by which some coveting after have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows*" (1 Tm 6:10). Would that more preachers in the religious world

heeded those words.

It was the religious leaders of Jesus' day who put Him on the cross. The historian Luke recorded of them, "*And the Pharisees who were lovers of money ... scoffed at Him*" (Lk 16:14). When Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers, He overturned more than tables (Mt 21:12,13). He overturned the very foundation upon which the religious leaders based their financial security.

The Pharisees even used greed to accomplish their mission to dispose of Jesus. Judas, too, loved money (See Jn 12:1-6). So the religious leaders "*weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver*" (Mt 26:15). It was greed that moved the religious leaders to remove Jesus from their economy, and it was greed they used to implement their plan through Judas to have Him betrayed, and eventually crucified.

Greed (covetousness) is the idolization of money (Cl 3:5). But we must remember that the one who is covetous cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Co 6:10). Nevertheless, we are often as Esau who was willing to sacrifice his birthright for a pot of food to satisfy the lusts of the flesh (See Gn 25). We are sometimes more concerned over the things of this world that will perish in the great bomb fire to come, than we are about those things that will permeate the end of all things (See 2 Pt 3:10-13).

The problem with greed is that it focuses our minds on things of this world. But when we are living the gospel of Jesus, we do as what Paul instructed the Colossians who were struggling with

covetousness: "*If you then were raised with Christ, seek those things that are above Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Cl 3:1,2).

D. Cowardice crucified Christ.

John 12:42 is a record of many rulers who could have stopped the crucifixion of Jesus if they had enough courage to stand up for what they believed. But they were cowards, and thus allowed themselves to be intimidated by the "preachers" of the day who promoted the established religion of Judaism. John recorded, "*Among the chief rulers also many believed in Him [Jesus]. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*"

The problem was—as is common among religious leaders—that "*they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*" (Jn 12:43). Their cowardice, therefore, was based on selfish ambition and the preservation of their positions among the people. This is a very real scenario in which many religious leaders find themselves today. They would sacrifice the truth of Jesus for the sake of their positions and purse.

In fear for our physical well-being, cowardice may arise in our own hearts in order to preserve ourselves from harm. At the time of the arrest of Jesus, it was stated, "*Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled*" (Mt 26:56). Even Peter "*followed Him at a distance*" (Mt 26:58). However, we must understand this fear of the disciples in the historical context

of what they believed at the time. To them, their leader who was supposed to establish a physical kingdom of Israel, was being arrested (See At 1:6). It was a time when they were still focusing on the physical restoration of national Israel (See At 1:16). However, after the resurrection of Jesus they would be convinced that Jesus was a king of a spiritual kingdom (See Jn 18:36; Rm 1:4).

After the resurrection of Jesus, and with the threat of beating and imprisonment, the same Peter who followed from afar off during the trial of Jesus, later stood boldly before the religious rulers and said, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard*” (At 4:19,20).

Nevertheless, we must not take lightly the intimidation that can come from the established religious leadership of religion. For example, consider the situation during Peter’s ministry in the city of Antioch. “*Before certain men came from James [in Jerusalem], he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision*” (Gl 2:12).

It seems that Peter could stand bravely before unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, but he found it difficult to stand bravely before believing Christian Jews who came up to Antioch from Jerusalem. Because he openly denied living by the gospel in fellowship with Gentile brethren, Paul approached him with

the statement that “*he stood condemned*” (Gl 2:11). If we are ever in a situation where we deny the gospel because we are fearful of standing for Jesus, then we too stand condemned. If we are ever ashamed of the gospel, we are in trouble (Rm 1:16).

For those who would allow their cowardice to deny the opportunity to believe in and obey the gospel, John has a message: “*But the cowardly ... will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*” (Rv 21:8). We must, therefore, take courage in the following words of Jesus: “*And do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Mt 10:28).

It takes courage to stand up for Jesus. It takes courage to stand for that which is truth. If we are afraid to let our light shine for Jesus, then we have succumbed to fear. But we must remember that “*there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear*” (1 Jn 4:18). Therefore, we must “*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Ep 6:10). It is through His power that we stand. If we trust in ourselves, we will fall. But if we firmly believe that God works mightily in us through His power, then He can through us “*do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us*” (Ep 3:20). The Canadian novelist, Charles William Gordon, put this strength into the following words:

Be sure you are right, and then stand. At first you will be denounced, then you will be deified. At first you will be rejected, then you will be accepted. First men will sneer at you, then if you wear well, they will swear by you. First the sneer, and then the cheer. First the lash, then the laurel. First the curse, then the caress.

First the trial, then the triumph. First the cross, then the crown. For every scar upon thy brow, thou shalt have a star in thy diadem. Stand somewhere, and let humanity know where you stand. Stand for something, and let humanity know what you stand for. Be sure you are right, and then stand.

Chapter 4

JESUS IS POWER!

In Romans 1, Paul wrote of all those who had lived since the beginning of time and before the cross. He made a very profound argument that John also used when he inscribed his historical record of Jesus. Paul's argument was that God will be just in final judgment when His wrath "*is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness*" (Rm 1:18). God will be proved just "*because that which is known about God is manifest within them*" (Rm 1:19). God is the Father of our spirits, and thus being the Father of that part of us that is created after His image, "*they [the ungodly] should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might grope after Him and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us*" (At 17:27).

From the beginning of time, God revealed "*the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world,*" which things, "*are clearly seen*" in that which has been created (Rm 1:20). But because the ungodly refused to follow their instinctive inclinations to reach out for a moral guide that is above man, they will be "*without excuse*" when condemned in final judg-

ment (Rm 1:20). The evidence of God that was revealed through the physical world was sufficient to relieve God from any accountability for judging fairly those who refused to have Him in their minds.

This brings us to the time when God in eternity revealed Himself through the incarnate Son of God in the first century. The God who revealed Himself, both in nature and through the natural instinct of the human being to seek for a Higher Power, was manifested in the likeness of men (Jn 1:1,14; see Ph 2:5-9). This brings us to the purpose for which John wrote the gospel of John. At the conclusion of John's document on Deity, he identified both the audience to whom he wrote, and the reason for recording the advent of the incarnational God the Son into the material world He created (Cl 1:16).

*And Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. **But these are written so that you might believe that Jesus***

is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name (Jn 20:30,31).

We would assume that John wrote an apologetical document concerning who the man Jesus was in order to give all information necessary for all who hear of Jesus to respond to Him. We would not assume that John's audience was composed of all those who already believed. He wrote "*that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*" His defense document was written, not for the purpose of keeping believers faithful, **but to bring unbelievers into the family of believers.**

We thus have an inspired platform of signs upon which to interpret the nature of the content of John. It is a platform of evidence upon which we would conclude that this Jesus of Nazareth was the incarnate Word who was formerly with the Father, but then came into flesh of man (Jn 1:1,14). We would thus view the book of John as a book of Christian evidences that are presented for the purpose of creating belief in the minds of those who do not know who Jesus is. It is for this reason that this book has been commonly referred to as the "Gospel of Belief."

In the preceding statement of John 20:30,31, John said that "*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples.*" We thus deduct two conclusions concerning his purpose for writing. First, his purpose was not as Matthew, Mark and Luke. John had a concise purpose. He sought to write an apologetic that

Jesus was the incarnate Son of God.

Second, John used only **seven** of the signs of Jesus to lead us to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God. We thus come to a marvelous conclusion: It does not take a multitude of miracles to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. And possibly, and more important, it does not take a continuation of miracles throughout history in order to maintain one's faith that Jesus is the Son of God. In fact, the very nature of John's recording only seven miracles (signs) of Jesus assumes that if one has the document of John, he would never again need any confirming miracles to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. If by chance a particular religious group did seek to depend on a supposed continual miraculous confirmation that Jesus was the Son of God, then this would be a denial of the purpose for which John wrote. It would marginalize the very book of John, and witness to the fact that those who continue to need miracles for faith have a difficult time with their faith.

If John recorded signs that Jesus worked in order to produce faith in Jesus, then we must assume that the Holy Spirit presents the book of John to us as sufficient to produce faith. If we need more miracles to believe, then we are saying that the book of John is insufficient to produce the faith that is pleasing to God.

We conclude that the seven miraculous signs that were recorded by John are sufficient to produce a faith that is adequate for salvation. We will not, therefore, call on God for more confirming miracles, though God continues to work

in our lives. But working in our lives within the natural order of things was not the confirming signs that John provided in his document. John focused on those miraculous events that were already perceived by the people to be God working outside the natural order of the physical world.

The fact that the seven signs of Jesus that John recorded were out of the ordinary occurrence of natural laws is what classifies them as “signs.” They were signals of Someone who was beyond this world. We would not, therefore, nullify the seven signs of John by saying that such signs were only the natural occurrence of the physical laws of nature. The fact that John records these particular signs as evidence that Jesus was the Son of God validates the fact that what Jesus did through these signs was out of the ordinary, and thus, He was no ordinary man.

God expects of us, as He did of those before the coming of Jesus, to accept these seven miracles as sufficient proof to conclude *“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”* (Jn 20:31). We conclude as Nicodemus when he came to Jesus in the night: *“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”* (Jn 3:2).

A. Evidence of changing water into wine (Jn 2:1-22):

This miracle was the first of Jesus’ signs in Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:11). The occasion was a marriage feast to which

He and the disciples had been invited. Having accepted the invitation of those who were to be married, Jesus, and His mother, were present with His disciples. The occasion for the miracle was when Jesus’ mother said to Him, *“They have no wine”* (Jn 2:3). Since Jesus responded to His mother with the statement, *“My hour has not yet come,”* it may be that this was a preemptive sign that His mother expected Him to do. At least Jesus answered His mother in a manner that she expected something from Him in order to solve the problem. So after His kind correction of her misunderstanding concerning His ministry, and without any showmanship, Jesus proceeded to provide the wine.

Regardless of the occasion, or the reasons for revealing His power, John used this sign to encourage the people to start thinking about who He was. In order to begin their wonder concerning who He was, they had to be initiated into the supernatural realm from where He originated.

There were six water pots available, the contents of which were used by the guests for cleansing for a feast (Jn 2:6; see Mk 7:1-9). Since the water had already been used by the guests for washing, Jesus asked that they again be filled with water. Once they were filled, Jesus instructed, *“Now draw some out ...”* (Jn 2:8). When the master of the feast tasted the contents, he excitedly proclaimed that the wine was superior to that which was commonly served at the beginning of a feast.

The master of the feast was unaware of the circumstances and origin of the

wine that he classified as superior. He did not realize that the turning of the water into wine was accomplished by Jesus, and that the change was **instantaneous**. There were no dramatic performances on the part of Jesus in order to call attention to what He had just done. There was no ecstatic behavior on the part of those who witnessed the miracle. The sign was simply done, and the result reaped the desired response: *“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory. **And His disciples believed in Him**”* (Jn 2:11).

If the disciples believed with only the one sign of turning water into wine, **then we would conclude that it takes only one valid confirming miracle to produce faith**. John wants us to understand that a valid miracle is enough to confirm the presence of the supernatural. One valid miracle is more evidential than a host of fake miracles.

For the disciples, this was only the beginning of an adventure of amazement that would continue for over three years. They would learn that this Jesus they followed was the Master over the elements of the world that He had created (See Cl 1:16). In the future, they would see greater things. They would eventually arrive at the conclusion that the Son of God was truly in their presence. By the time John takes his readers to the resurrection of Lazarus, he has prepared our minds to accept the fact that the Father was working powerfully through the incarnate Son in order to glorify both Himself and the Son.

B. Evidence of a nobleman’s son (Jn 4:46-54):

The occasion for this miraculous “outreach” of Jesus reached over a distance of about twenty kilometers (about sixteen miles). At the time, Jesus was in Cana, but the nobleman’s son was in Capernaum (Jn 4:46). When the desperate father *“heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him”* (Jn 4:47).

Only the father of a son who is near death could understand the desperation of this father. The son *“was at the point of death.”* He thus pleaded with Jesus, *“Sir, come down before my child dies.”* It is interesting to note that Jesus gave only a simple reply to the desperate plea of the father: *“Go your way. Your son lives.”* It was an emphatic declaration. No explanation was needed. This statement was made about the seventh hour of the day, and immediately, the father set out for home, believing that Jesus had answered his plea.

The response of the father manifested his faith in what Jesus could do. He was a pleading father in the presence of Jesus, but with a faith that would be increased by the healing of his son. We would expect that he would urge Jesus to personally come to where his son was about to die. But his faith moved him to leave immediately to return to his son. *“**And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him and he went his way**”* (Jn 4:50).

He traveled throughout the night in order to return to his son. We wonder

what was going through his mind as he made his way back home to the bedside of his dying son. While he was yet some distance from home, but still on his way, his excited servants met him on the road in the morning hours, and proclaimed to him, "*Your son lives!*" (Jn 4:51). It was there that men probably fell to their knees in thanksgiving to God.

When the father regained his composure, he obviously asked his servants when the child was healed. He wanted to connect the dots between pronouncement and healing. The servants replied, "*Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him*" (Jn 4:52). When the father connected the dots, the healing had its immediate effect on the hearts of both father and servants, and the entire household: "*And he himself believed, and his whole house*" (Jn 4:53).

And herein is defined John's use of the word "sign" in reference to the supernatural work of Jesus during His ministry. This healing was a sign of something greater than this world, and thus, greater than the man Jesus Himself. Belief on the part of the father and his household was evidence that Jesus had control of that which was beyond this world. The result, therefore, was more than gratitude. It was belief that Jesus was the Son of God who had control of the supernatural world of God.

We must compare this miracle that took place over a great distance with the theatrical performances of those today who claim to be working confirming miracles. In this case, there was no fanfare. There was no gathered audience.

There was no smoke from a stage, or screaming from a microphone. There was only a simple statement from Jesus, and the deed from a distance was done.

When we read what Jesus promised His disciples when He gave them the great commission, we must remember what transpired in the circumstances that surrounded this sign. After saying to the disciples, "*Going, therefore, disciple all the nations,*" Jesus promised, "*And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Mt 28:19,20). Jesus did not have to be in their presence in order to be with them. Our relationship with Jesus does not mean He has to be right here with us in order to be with us.

Jesus had earlier promised the disciples, "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them*" (Mt 18:20). As the omnipresent God was with David, so He is today wherever there is a child of God: "*Yes,*" David wrote, "*though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me*" (Ps 23:4).

The power of Jesus is in our presence in every situation, and under all circumstances. In prison, Paul confidently affirmed, "*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*" (Ph 4:13). The strengthening of Jesus is not confined by location, as the power of Jesus to heal the nobleman's son was not confined to Cana where Jesus was at the time. As one with God, Jesus is now omnipresent, and thus, His power encompasses the world. Therefore, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom will I fear? The*

Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom will I be afraid?” (Ps 27:1).

We must not think that because Jesus ascended out of the presence of His disciples that He ascended out of reach with His power. The preposterous teaching that we now need another mediator between God and man because Jesus is so distant, attacks the very nature of the omnipresence of God. There is one mediator between God and man simply because Jesus will always be close in order to mediate on our behalf (See 1 Tm 2:5).

C. **Evidence of the disabled man** (Jn 5:1-9):

This is a case of a surprised healing. The myth of the day was that an angel on occasion supposedly came down and stirred the waters of the pool of Bethesda. The one to be first in the water after it was stirred by a visiting angel, would be healed.

(Many manuscripts do not include verse 4. It is not included because it is supposed that it was added later by some scribe in order to explain to John’s readers, who were primarily Gentiles outside the region of Palestine, why there was this belief in reference to the waters of Bethesda.)

Nevertheless, the disabled man was there with others, and the common belief, which we suppose was psychosomatic, was that he would be made well of a thirty-eight-year affliction if he could only be the first in the water after its stirring.

So Jesus asked a question that had

an obvious answer: “*Do you want to be made whole?*” (Jn 5:6). We suppose that the question was asked simply to gain the attention of the man, for there were others there also who desired to be healed. This particular man did not know who Jesus was (Jn 5:13). He may have known of Jesus, but he did not know him by facial recognition.

After Jesus had asked the question concerning his willingness to be healed, Jesus simply stated, “*Rise, take up your bed and walk*” (Jn 5:8). There were no theatrical performances on the part of Jesus. There were no crowd-gathering speeches, and call for attention. There was not even a statement to be healed. Jesus simply made the statement that he take up his bed and walk. The deed was done, and realized only when the man stood up. This is something far different from those today who conduct fake healings in order to spread fake news of their deceptive works. We must never underestimate the desire for notoriety among those who presume to fake true confirming signs.

John’s account of the event reads, “*And immediately the man was made whole*” (Jn 5:9). When a true confirming miracle took place, the result was immediate and perceived real by the beholders. Thirty-eight years of infirmity came to an end in a moment. The disabled man was healed with only a statement to take up his bed and walk. There was no command to be healed.

Because of the length of the infirmity, the man was well-known throughout the region. Many had passed by and

given him either food or money. Because of the immediate nature of the healing, the impact of the healing was made known to everyone who knew him. The man was not told to go home, and that he would eventually get better. The result was instantaneous, and the impact on the people who knew him was also instantaneous.

Because the man did not know who it was who healed him, we assume from John's listing of this miracle that Jesus wanted us to know that there was no psychosomatic nature about His healing of this man and others. In other words, the healed were not hypnotically convinced in their minds that they were healed, and then three days later they recovered from some hypnotic trance of being healed. They were not healed during a hysterical meeting, and then "unhealed" days later when they were at home and recovered from the emotional hysteria of the moment.

John records this healing in order to convince us that Jesus did not heal because He was an accepted "healer" of the day, or one who generated emotional hysteria in the minds of those He healed. He wanted us to understand that the personality of Jesus was not used to convince people that they were healed. For the one who was healed, especially on this occasion, was surprised. The man did not request to be healed. Upon the pronouncement of Jesus, therefore, he discovered that thirty-eight years of being crippled had immediately gone away. It was a surprise. The healing was not only of the bones of his legs, but also the

strengthening of his muscles, for he took up his bed and walked away (Jn 5:9).

After the healing, Jesus slipped away from the startled crowd (Jn 5:13). However, when He knew He could have a more private conversation with the man, He sought him out in the temple courtyard (Jn 5:14). It was during this personal encounter with the healed man that Jesus encouraged him to live contrary to a sinful way of life (Jn 5:14). And then what happened was what Jesus evidently intended to happen: "*The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole*" (Jn 5:15). And now, this news provoked the Jewish religious leaders to come searching for Jesus, which thing Jesus wanted. For this was a "*feast of the Jews*" when Jews of those times made a journey to Jerusalem, possibly on this occasion for the Passover/Pentecost feast (Jn 5:1). It was during this feast that Jesus wanted His name to be taken back home to nations throughout the Roman Empire. He wanted everyone who heard what He had done in reference to the healing of the impotent man to be broadcast throughout the nations.

D. Evidence of creation (Jn 6:1-14; see Mt 14:13-21):

At the time of this miraculous production of fish and loaves, we are given an indication by John that this was not the fourth miracle of Jesus, but the listing of the fourth miracle that he used to substantiate his proposition that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (See Jn

20:30,31). In this text it states that the great multitude “*followed Him because they saw His signs*” (Jn 6:2). The word “signs” is plural, and thus we assume that many more signs had been worked by Jesus before this sign. The signs that John has recorded to this point continues to build on his apologetic proposition.

On this occasion, it is very important to notice one interesting request that Jesus made after the feeding of the multitudes: “*Gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost*” (Jn 6:12). In the phrase, “*so that nothing is lost,*” Jesus had more in mind than simply gathering up the fragments that there be no waste. He wanted the disciples, after gathering every fragment of food, to deduct something from the quantity of the leftovers. “*They gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves that remained over*” (Jn 6:13). This amount came from an initial five fish and two loaves of bread (Mt 14:17). Now it was time for the disciples to start making deductions.

Five thousand men, plus the women and children, were gathered in the multitude (Jn 6:10; see Mt 14:21). There could have easily been over ten thousand people. But when the fragments were gathered up, they filled twelve baskets. From five loaves and two fish, they ended up with twelve baskets of leftovers. Jesus wanted His disciples to do the math, and then come to the conclusion of who was standing in their midst.

Jesus was more than a good Rabbi, more than a good teacher, and more than

a prophet. Since only God can create, He wanted the disciples to gather up the fragments in order to come to the conclusion that **it was the Creator of all things who stood in their midst** (See Cl 1:16). If only God can create, then Jesus wanted them to understand that in some way God was there.

Of all the supernatural wonders that Jesus did in His incarnate state of being on earth, this miracle, and the feeding of the 4,000 on another occasion, brings us to the conclusion that Jesus had command of the supernatural. In the flesh, He could call on the power of God in order to bring about the confirmation of who He was before He came into the flesh of man (Jn 1:14). He was in the beginning with God, and was God (Jn 1:1,2). But we must not think for a moment that while He was on earth that He forsook His command of the power of the supernatural. The twelve baskets full of fragments will always be a profound testimony to the fact that Jesus on earth was far above any prophet among men. It is superfluous, therefore, to compare Jesus as a prophet to self-declared prophets as Muhammad.

Those who witnessed what happened on the occasion of feeding the multitudes, declared, “*This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world*” (Jn 6:14). This was the Prophet about whom Moses prophesied who would come after him (Dt 18:15-22). The miracle of the loaves and fishes at least took the minds of the people back to Moses’ prophecy of the Prophet who would come after his likeness. But Jesus was more.

For the disciples, Jesus wanted the event to take their minds far beyond Moses, and Jesus being only the Prophet. When Jesus later gathered the twelve together and asked them the question, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” (Mt 16:13), He was seeking a response that He was more than the Prophet. In order to take their thinking to where John is taking our thinking in recording this particular sign, Jesus called the disciples’ attention to two miracles. These were the miracles of creation in the feeding of the multitude of the 4,000 and 5,000. He was thus demanding the answer that Peter gave: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Mt 16:16). The miracle of creating twelve baskets full of fragments moved Jesus beyond being the One about whom Moses prophesied. The fragments moved Jesus into being the creating Son of God.

E. Evidence of water walking (Jn 6:16-21):

This miracle was for the disciples, for the people saw the disciples enter the boat, but not Jesus (Jn 6:22). Everything happened at sea in the darkness of the night, just as Jesus had planned. The situation was set up by Jesus, for He commanded the disciples to get into the boat and make their way to the other side of the sea (Mt 14:22). He then sent the multitudes away from the scene (Mt 14:23). It was then that He went up a mountain in order to pray and wait for the opportune time to come to the disciples in the night. Jesus waited until the storm at sea

had prepared them emotionally for what He was about to do. So when the storm at sea had battered both occupants and boat for some time, Jesus “*went to them, walking on the sea*” (Mt 14:25).

Of course such a happening would terrify the disciples, which thing it did (Jn 6:19). John does not, as did Matthew, go into great detail concerning what transpired. John’s purpose for recording this incident was to generate faith in the minds of his readers by bringing his readers to the point of confession that Jesus is the Son of God. So the conclusion to which John drew his readers was the control over the natural world that was within the power of Jesus as the Son of God.

When this miracle first occurred, the apostles were the only witnesses. The multitudes were left to question how Jesus made His way to where the boat eventually landed (Jn 6:22-24). Only when John recorded this event, or when the apostles spoke of it after the Pentecost of A.D. 30, did the people, and ourselves, conclude that Jesus in the flesh had power over the elements of this world (See At 27:21-26). As Jonah perceived that the storm at sea was the work of God to turn his way back to Nineveh, so this storm at sea was for the purpose of revealing to the apostles that if they followed Jesus, they would not be cast into the depths of the sea. They must remember that the One they followed had command of the laws of nature.

John left out the incident when Jesus called Peter to come to Him while He was standing above the waters in a raging storm. Matthew included the con-

clusion to which John sought to bring us to confess after reading such a testimony. When the storm was quieted, and the sea as smooth as glass that reflected the heavenly bodies, the disciples worshiped Him right there in the boat. They correctly concluded, *“Truly, You are the Son of God”* (Mt 14:33).

Jesus was finally getting through to them. Mark recorded the reaction of the disciples at the moment, *“And they were greatly astonished, for they had not understood the miracle of the loaves because their heart was hardened”* (Mk 6:51,52). After the feeding of the multitudes, the twelve disciples had just experienced something that was surreal. They were still trying to comprehend the twelve baskets of fragments. What had happened had not yet “sunk in.” The walking on the water that followed immediately after the feeding of the 5,000 intensified the impact of what Jesus wanted to do in transforming their thinking concerning who He was. It was not that their hearts were hardened against Him, but that the awesome result of the feeding of the 5,000, and the walking on the water, was almost too much for the human mind to comprehend in such a short time.

Therefore, when Jesus came up into the boat, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him, which worship is to be given only to God.

It would have been blasphemy for these Jews to worship any man on earth. It would have been a violation of the first of the ten commandments: *“You will have no other gods before Me. You will not*

bow down yourself to them ...” (Ex 20:3-5). But here in this boat in the calm of a sea, twelve Jewish men are bowing down to Jesus. What they came to realize on those calm waters in the middle of the night, was what John wants us to conclude and do in reference to this Jesus of Nazareth. He is truly the Son of the living God. He is One before whom we must bow down and worship.

F. Evidence of the blind who see (Jn 9:1-12):

The event of this miracle was incidental. Jesus was going somewhere and “*passed by*” a man whom He saw was blind (Jn 9:1). As with the disabled man at the pool of Bethesda, this healing was only incidental to what Jesus was doing or to where He was going. He did not call a great crowd of people together, and then select out of them those who volunteered to be healed. He called no one up on a stage in order to do a theatrical performance before the people.

We must “*read between the lines*” in order to better understand what transpired on this occasion. As Jesus walked by, He noticed this blind man who had been blind since birth (Jn 9:1). In order to heal the man, Jesus made mud by spitting on dirt. He then put the mud on the man’s eyes. He then instructed the man, *“Go wash in the pool of Siloam”* (Jn 9:7).

It seems that Jesus did not want the blind man to be healed in His presence, or the presence of the disciples. And probably most important of all, he wanted the man to know that it was Jesus who

healed him. Therefore, it would be a healing that would be known first only by the blind man himself. So obediently, the man “*went his way and washed. And he came back seeing*” (Jn 9:7). He was led away, and then probably came back by himself. There were no crowds to be amazed, and no cheers of praise from an overenthusiastic audience.

It was only later when the neighbors who knew the man, began to question as to how he gained his sight. The questioning by the neighbors as to how he was able to see affirms the fact that the man was actually blind. They had walked by the man for years and given him alms as he begged on the street. But now he could see. They knew that while he was blind, he was not deceiving them for contributions. Their testimony is that he was truly blind.

“*Where is He?*” the neighbors questioned. “*I do not know,*” was the reply (Jn 9:12). John wants us to know that Jesus did not unveil the supernatural on this occasion in order to draw attention to Himself at the time and on this occasion. All the healed man knew was that it was Jesus who did the deed.

Since this was probably the Pass-over/Pentecost feast that Jesus attended during His ministry, He was building inquiry, or curiosity, in the minds of the people that Someone was in town who was the Prophet about whom Moses had prophesied. The name “Jesus” would become renowned as time went by, and by the time Jesus visited two more Pass-over/Pentecost feast after this occasion. It would be throughout this time that

Jesus would build a case file of miracles that would demand the conclusion that John later affirmed from the record of only seven of His miracles: “... *that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” (Jn 20:31).

G. Evidence of the resurrected (Jn 11:1-46):

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was to prove something greater than Jesus “practicing what He preached.” At the beginning of His ministry, He proclaimed, “*He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life*” (Jn 5:24). “*The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and will come forth*” (Jn 5:28,29). By the time Jesus came to Bethany where His three friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, lived, it was time for a demonstration of what He had been teaching in reference to eternal life.

When the death of Lazarus was initially reported to Jesus, it was time in the ministry of Jesus to reveal the power that was within His control. And when this power was released, He would accomplish the following: “*This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God might be glorified by it*” (Jn 11:4).

At the time, the disciples seem to still be in a state of “unbelief” concerning the totality of who Jesus was. They had difficulty in bringing together all that He was. They had by this time in His ministry experienced a great deal. But raising the dead would certainly shock

their thinking just before the conclusion of His earthly ministry. So Jesus said to them, “*Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go so that I may awake him out of sleep*” (Jn 11:11). The disciples did not understand what He was saying. “*Lord, if he sleeps,*” they replied, “*he will recover*” (Jn 11:12). However, “*Jesus spoke of his death. But they thought that He was speaking of taking rest in sleep*” (Jn 11:13).

In order to increase their still inadequate faith, Jesus said to them, “*I am glad for your sakes that I was not there [when Lazarus died], so that you may believe*” (Jn 11:15). Now Jesus has revealed the purpose for His raising of Lazarus from the dead. The resurrection was not only for the disciples to believe, but for us also, that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 20:31). Since only God can raise the dead, then they, as we, need to conclude that Jesus was and is Deity.

Upon His arrival to Bethany, Jesus said to Martha, “*Your brother will rise again*” (Jn 11:23). He continued, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet he will live*” (Jn 11:25). This claim needed proof. It needed a demonstration. It was something about which Jesus had spoken throughout His ministry, and now it was the time to make good on His claim.

In the emotional build up to the main event, there was discussion, if not blame that if Jesus had been present, He could have healed Lazarus. But this would have been no grand finale of proof

that He was the Son of God with all the supernatural power that is characteristic with Deity. His healing power had been substantiated by this time, for the people standing around said, “*Could not this Man who opened the eyes of the blind have also kept this man from dying?*” (Jn 11:37). The answer to the question would be YES! But the purpose for Jesus’ delay in coming to Bethany was to make sure that Lazarus was dead and buried, and thus, there would have been no temptation for Him to heal His friend from a sickness. It was time for a resurrection.

Therefore, with the commanding statement, “*Lazarus, come forth,*” the world was changed forever, and the power of the resurrection after the crucifixion of Jesus was made possible and real (Jn 11:43). All that Jesus had taught throughout His ministry concerning “words of life” found validation in these three words. Our hope in the Son of God finds meaning in the fact that Jesus had the power to be raised, and by the same power that raised Lazarus, we too would be raised.

By the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus laid the foundation to give His disciples hope when He himself was laid in a tomb of death. Lazarus would be the proof that His own death would not be the end. Though after the cross the disciples may have momentarily forgotten the resurrection of Lazarus, they needed to know that the power that raised Lazarus did not come from the man Jesus, but from Him who remained in heaven. In His incarnate state in ministry, Jesus had control of the supernatural through

the power of the Holy Spirit (See Lk 4:14).

Mary had complained, “*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*” (Jn 11:32). Physical presence in order that supernatural power be released still plagued the thinking of the disciples. Thus before Jesus cried out for the resurrection of Lazarus, He cried out to the Father, that the Father resurrect Lazarus in order “*that they may believe that You have sent Me*” (Jn 11:42). The power of the resurrection came from above, but only at the command of Jesus. We must not miss this point.

With the same power from heaven, Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul explained in writing,

I pray that the eyes of your heart be en-

lightened so that you may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe ... that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead ... (Ep 1:18-21).

The same power that raised Lazarus from the dead, was the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It will be this same power that will raise us from the dead when Jesus comes again. All that Paul said in conclusion to this reality were the words of the Spirit, “*Comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18).

Therefore, we remember that “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His righteous saints*” (Ps 116:15). We have thus been delivered by Him from the fear of death (Hb 2:14,15). Thank you, Jesus!

Chapter 5

JESUS' LAST WORDS!

In a TV show a scenario of destiny was established by a supposedly dying man. The man was lying in a hospital bed with his immediate family and church family gathered around. The preacher was holding the dying man's hand. The preacher asked if the dying man had any last words for his family and friends. The man uttered, “Yes, I did not get all my business done!” And then he expired.

Jesus gave some last words from the cross, which words communicate a great deal. However, He did get His business done, and so, it was time to relinquish His

spirit into the hands of the Father. He could confidently give up His spirit on the cross because He had finished His business for which He came into the world.

The last words of a passing loved one are always precious. They are words that the living remember throughout their lives. And so it was with the last words of Jesus from the cross. These are words the Holy Spirit wanted us to remember, and thus, He guided inspired writers to make sure that we remembered the last words of Jesus, for the meaning of the words carry with them some very profound thoughts.

A. Last words of forgiveness:

From the cross, Jesus said, "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing***" (Lk 23:34). These are words that we would expect to hear from the One whose business it was to come for us in our sin. In our ignorance, we did not know how far away from God we had strayed. The cross will always be a reality check of our ignorance while we were steeped in our own self-righteous religiosity. Even in the actual act of crucifixion, those who drove nails through the hands of Jesus were doing so in the ignorance of their own sin to crucify the Son of God.

The self-righteous religious leaders who called for the crucifixion of Jesus were so caught up in their own religion that they called for the condemnation of Jesus because they thought they were preserving the "Jews' religion" from the influence of a rebel. But the execution of their deed was based on the fact that they did not believe that Jesus was who He said He was. Almost everything that Jesus was and taught was contrary to their self-righteous religiosity (See Rm 10:1-3).

To the Roman soldiers who did the actual deed of crucifixion, Jesus was just another malefactor who had to be executed. Every blow of the hammer was an indication of their ignorance of the incarnate hands through which they drove sharp nails. Nevertheless, while the incarnate flesh of Jesus strained against the nails of the cross, Jesus was still thinking of the business for which

He came into the world. Forgiveness was His business, and thus in His last moments on the cross, He was still doing His business.

The preceding words of Jesus concerning forgiveness, reveal that He understood why they wanted Him on the cross. They truly did not know what they were doing. They were as one of their leaders who launched a vehement persecution against those who later gave their allegiance to Jesus as His disciples. This leader (Paul) later wrote after finally relinquishing to the power of the testimony of Jesus' disciples, "***I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief***" (1 Tm 1:13). Jesus knew that many of those who cried out that He be crucified, would later, as Paul, believe that He was the Christ and Son of the living God.

Those who nailed Jesus to the cross did so, because at the time, they had no interest in who Jesus really was. The Jewish religious leaders were caught up in their own religiosity. The Roman world of idolatry was fascinated with the gods they had created after their own imaginations. It was of this religious world that Paul later wrote: "***This wisdom [about the Son of God] none of the princes of this age has known, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory***" (1 Co 2:8).

Nevertheless, the disciples who truly followed Jesus after the resurrection emulated the spirit of the last words of forgiveness that Jesus uttered from the cross. When Peter later stood before

some of the people in Jerusalem who had aided in the crucifixion, this spirit of forgiveness was revealed. *“And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers”* (At 3:17). On his mission journey to the city of Antioch of Pisidia, Paul also reminded the people of the ignorance of those in Jerusalem who crucified Jesus:

For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor the voices of the prophets who are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him (At 13:27).

Jesus, who was executed out of ignorance was actually God working through the ignorance men to accomplish the salvation of all those who would eventually confess Jesus as Lord and Christ. We must not misunderstand what was happening behind the scenes at the time of the crucifixion. During the trial and execution of Jesus, Satan thought he was having his best day. He had used well the ignorance of men. But in his deed of deception, God was actually revealing the mystery of salvation that had been held in secret since the garden of Eden (See Ep 3:3-5; 1 Pt 1:10-12). Therefore, we must not forget what Jesus said in His plan to lead Himself to the cross:

My Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again (Jn 10:17,18).

Jesus gave His life voluntarily for us. **The cross was no accident.** It was planned and executed by Jesus. He willed that the nails be driven through His incarnate flesh. While on the cross, Jesus could have called on ten thousand angels to deliver Himself from the fate that He had set for Himself. In the garden of Gethsemane at the time of His arrest, He reminded the disciples, *“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me more than twelve legions of angels”* (Mt 26:53). We must never come to any conclusion that would bring us into doubt concerning the predestined purpose of the cross. We can sorrow for His suffering while there, but we must rejoice that He was there. Any theology that would presume that the cross as an accident, afterthought, or miscalculation on the part of God in His eternal plan of redemption, must immediately be discarded as false.

Regardless of the torment of pain on the cross, Jesus was practicing that which He had preached throughout His ministry. *“And whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple”* (Lk 14:27). And when we take up our crosses, we too must be willing to make the same statement from our crosses that Jesus made. Jesus would remind us, *“Bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you”* (Lk 6:28). It was as if Jesus were practicing what He preached when He prayed that those who crucified Him be forgiven. At the time, they did not know who He really was, or what they were doing.

The prayer of Jesus from the cross

was answered fifty-three days later by about three thousand people. When the apostle Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, he announced to those who had crucified Jesus, *“Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (At 2:36). The message cut the people to the heart (At 2:37). That day, *“those who received his word were baptized ... about three thousand souls”* (At 2:41). They were cut to the heart, because in their own ignorance, they had crucified the Messiah (Christ) of Israel who was now Lord of all (At 2:36).

From that day of Pentecost, those who were informed of the incarnate God who was crucified in ignorance, became obedient to the gospel that was set in motion. *“So the word of God increased. And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (At 6:7). There is always forgiveness waiting for those who respond to the gospel of Jesus. The following words of Joy Tidwell express well our thinking:

An angry mob milled round the town,
There was violence in the air;
A man was tried and guilty found,
A cross he had to bear.

Up the hill and down the road,
So heavy it became;
People scoffed, and laughed, and joked,
And revelled at his pain.

He faltered, and a helping hand,
Relieved part of the load;
But no one there could help remove,
What waited down the road.

A crown of thorns upon his head,
Was mockery to the king;
They nailed him high upon the cross,
Their voices they did ring,

“If you be who you say you are,
Come down and prove it true.”
“Forgive them Father,” was all he said,
“They know no what they do.”

The mob that still lives on this earth,
Is just as bad as then;
His cross is just as heavy now,
We load it down with sin.

Up the hill and down the road,
Until his back is sore;
We laugh and joke and gaily live,
And forget the pain he bore.

Oh, we might help him for awhile,
To carry his heavy load;
But we get weary and get tired,
And take off down the road.

We leave him there alone to face,
Again the crown of thorns;
We mock him as the others did,
When his flesh was ripped and torn.

As he did then, he looks down now,
In compassion tried and true;
“Father, forgive them,” he still says,
“For they know not what they do!”

B. Last words of hope:

With forgiveness still on His mind in His last moments on the cross, Jesus turned to the repentant thief and said, *“Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Lk 23:43). In this life, we will never know this man to whom Jesus spoke these comforting words. All we know is what the repentant thief said to the other criminal who was crucified along with him, *“Do you not fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?”* (Lk 23:40).

We could say that the one to whom Jesus promised Paradise was a God-fearing man who was caught by the authorities while in the wilderness of criminality. He knew that he was receiving just punishment for his sins of a wayward life. But on the cross, his mind was turned toward meeting the God against whom he had sinned in leading a wayward life on earth. He then turned to Jesus in remorse of repentance, and asked for a last possibility of hope against the One whom he had sinned. In remorse, he asked Jesus, "*Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom*" (Lk 23:42).

We do not know how long he had known Jesus, for he called Jesus by name. But we do know that he understood that Jesus was coming into His kingdom, though he did not know all that this kingdom entailed. He was not a nonreligious person. So Jesus, that we might be reminded of the authority He had even in His last hours on earth, expressed to us through His words to the thief what He had previously said, "*But that you may know that the **Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ...***" (Mt 9:6).

The announcement of the angel at the time of the birth of Jesus was correct: "*For to you a **Savior is born** this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord*" (Lk 2:11). Jesus was "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (Jn 1:29). And in His final moments on the cross, Jesus was doing His business for which He came into the world, that is, bringing forgiveness of sins to the world.

While on earth, Jesus had the divine

authority to forgive sins between man and God. He was on the cross in order to seal the deal between God and man. "*He **Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, so that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; **by whose wounds you were healed***" (1 Pt 2:24). So just as a last reminder while on earth, Jesus wanted us to remember why He was there that day nailed to a "tree." He was there on our behalf.

What the repentant thief realized the moment he drew his last breath, is what all those who believe in Jesus will realize when they, too, do the same. They will in that same day be with Jesus in Paradise. It is for this Paradise of God that we all hope.

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes **I will give to eat of the tree of life that is in the paradise of God*** (Rv 2:7).

C. Last words of maternal responsibility:

While hanging in torture on the cross, Jesus was still thinking of others. It would be only natural for Him to make sure his aged mother was in the capable hands of another. So to the young son of Zebedee, who at the time was probably still a teenager, or in his early twenties, John inscribed the following words of Jesus from the cross:

Therefore, when Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved [John]

standing by, He said to His mother, **“Woman, behold your son!”** Then He said to the disciple, **“Behold, your mother!”** And from that hour that disciple [John] took her into his own household (Jn 19:26).

This statement implies that the husband of Mary, Joseph, had already passed on by this time. The Holy Spirit deemed it unnecessary that we have a record of the passing of Joseph, for there is no statement in Scripture concerning the death of Jesus' earthly father. The death may have occurred before the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, which thing we might assume happened because only Jesus' mother was at the marriage feast early in the ministry of Jesus (See Jn 2:1-11). At least by the beginning of His ministry, Joseph is not mentioned with the mother, brothers and sisters when He came into *“His own country”* in the early part of His ministry (See Mk 6:1).

So in His last hours on the cross, Jesus wanted to assign the custody of His mother over to a specific person. If He had not done this, then the disciples themselves would have had to assume this responsibility, for the brothers and sisters were not believers at the time. We would assume that Jesus was thinking that throughout the burden of their duties as Christ-sent apostles, His mother may have been neglected.

We might wonder why the care for the mother of Jesus was not assumed by the children of Mary, specifically James, Judas (Jude), Joses or Simon, and the sisters (Mt 12:46-50; Mk 6:3; Jn 2:12; 7:3-

5). In the Jewish culture, it was the responsibility of the firstborn to make sure the mother was cared for in society. As the firstborn, therefore, Jesus was assuming His responsibility to make sure that His mother was never neglected, which thing would be true of a believer who had accepted Him as the Son of God.

At the time these words were spoken by Jesus, the earthly brothers and sisters apparently still did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world. Many would later become disciples, particularly James and Jude. But at this time, Jesus wanted everyone to know that He was entrusting His mother specifically into the hands of a believer. He was thinking spiritual, and not in reference to earthly family responsibilities.

D. Last words of despair:

It was the ninth hour according to Jewish time (3:00^{pm} in the afternoon Roman time) when *“Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is to say, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”* (Mt 27:46; Mk 14:34).

These last words were a quotation from a prophetic statement made in Psalm 22:1. It may have been that Jesus wanted everyone present to recall in their minds the prophecy of Psalm 22, which prophecy was a prophetic plea for the help of God in times of trouble. It was one of those times in the last moments of Jesus' ministry to the world when He approached God from the standpoint of

a truly incarnate human being.

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, every time He addressed His Father in prayer, He used the word "Father." But at this moment on the cross, He refers to the Father as "God." At the moment of death, His relationship with the Father had now changed. It had changed from Father to God. The father/son relationship during the ministry had now moved to the human/God relationship, for it was now time for the Father, as God, to take over in the death and resurrection of the Son (See Ep 1:20).

Jesus was not on the cross at this time in reference to a father/son relationship, but to turn the wrath of God from man. He was there as Moses stood before God on behalf of the people who were at the brink of being totally destroyed by God for their rebellion. God said to Moses, "*Let Me alone so that My wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them*" (Ex 32:10; see Dt 9:13,14).

The annihilation of all humanity was nigh unto happening when Jesus was on the cross. In the fullness of His own humanity, Jesus in His incarnate state was an eternal offering for sinful humanity who would be doomed without the cross. He was there to appease the wrath of God in order that God not wipe all humanity from the face of the earth as He did in the days of Noah (Gn 6:7; 7:21). So in these last words, Jesus was not only making the plea of Psalm 22 for Himself, but also for humanity in order that the wrath of God be turned away from those who had a spirit of rebellion, which included

all humanity. Paul enlightened us concerning this burden of sin that Jesus took with Him to the cross:

... whom [Jesus] God has set forth to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins in the past because of the forbearance of God (Rm 3:25; see Hb 9:15).

The psalmist was in a time of despair when the words of Psalm 22 spilled forth from his heart. And so in this last moment of darkness on the cross, Jesus too wanted to call to those who heard these last words, and later read them in Holy Scripture, that the finality of redemption was being paid by Him with an extreme price. Jesus' cry was a statement of eternal sacrifice which revealed that after the incarnation, it would never again be as it was when the Word was in eternity with God, and as God, before the incarnation. There was a permanency in the incarnation that He would continue throughout eternity in order that He truly be in a personal relationship with His brethren.

It was sin that necessitated such a sacrifice of the One who became sin for us. Through an incarnational sacrifice, God did eternally separate Himself from the form God. For the cause of the cross, the Son gave up being equal with God (See Ph 2:5-11). If we could realize the full impact and extent of His sacrifice, we too should cry out, "Our God, Our God, why have You forsaken Him?" Then we are brought to our knees with

overwhelming gratitude because He was forsaken for us.

Paul later wrote, "*For He [God] has made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Co 5:21). Peter concurred, "*He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree*" (1 Pt 2:24). We have difficulty understanding the metaphor of the moment. Jesus' atoning sacrifice was an eternal assumption of our sin upon Himself who knew no sin. He assumed our punishment for our sins. He was executed on our behalf. It was a time on the cross to let the world know that there would have been a certain eternal separation from God for every individual of humanity if it were not for Jesus who took upon Himself our punishment.

In order that we be reconciled to God, the cross was a moment when Jesus had to be separated from God through His assimilation of our sins in Himself. Only when we stand in the presence of God ourselves will we fully understand the implications of what Jesus meant in being "forsaken by God." But until that time, we will understand what the Holy Spirit revealed through both Paul and Peter that Jesus assumed the sins of mankind in order that all those who believe might have life in the name of Jesus (Jn 1:12).

E. Last words of humanity:

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had now been accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I

thirst'" (Jn 19:28). We reflect on John 1:14 when John revealed that the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us as a man. "I thirst" are words that reveal the incarnation of God the Son who became in all ways as a man in order to deliver us from our destiny of doom.

In His suffering as a man, it would only be natural that He would thirst. But there was more in the preceding statement than the natural thirst of one who was in great suffering, and nigh unto death. The statement is a fulfillment of the words of Psalm 69:21. In these last words, Jesus wanted to remind us again that He fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Himself and His kingdom reign. Every detail of prophecy was fulfilled, and thus, in the miracle of fulfilled prophecy all honest people, who would be seeking the true God beyond this world, would indeed conclude as the guard who was standing at the foot of the cross, "*Truly this was the Son of God*" (Mt 27:54).

F. Last words of finality:

"When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished'" (Jn 19:30). What was finished was the plan of redemption. He completed His business. The One who was crucified in prospect before the creation of the world had accomplished His destiny. After Jesus had created the world (Cl 1:16), He rested from His creating work (Gn 2:1,2). And now He had finished His redemption work for those whom He had created. All the prophecies from Genesis 3:15 to the

cross had been fulfilled in reference to the eternal plan of redeeming those of His creation who believed.

After the resurrection, and before His ascension, Jesus walked and talked with His disciples in order to remind them of the finality of His eternal plan of redeeming those who believed. Before His ascension, He said to the disciples,

*These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things must be fulfilled** that were written in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, concerning Me” (Lk 24:44).*

At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus revealed His purpose in reference to the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning His destiny. “Do not think,” He reminded His audience, “that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy, **but to fulfill**” (Mt 5:17).

Once all the prophecies were fulfilled, He brought to finality the Sinai law. It was set aside when the purpose for which it was given was accomplished. So at the time He was on the cross, the Sinai law, as well as all presumptuous and meritorious religious ordinances of men, were terminated. In being nailed to the cross, “He has made [us] *alive together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses*” (Cl 2:13). In order to do this on the cross, He wiped “*out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He took it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross***” (Cl 2:14). He took away all

meritorious religious laws that resulted in sin, for no man could keep law perfectly in order to save himself (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). And so, the words of Paul are true:

*Therefore, my brethren, **you also became dead to the [Sinai] law through the body of Christ, so that you should be married to another**, even to Him who is raised from the dead, so that we should bring forth fruit to God (Rm 7:4).*

In the last words of Jesus from the cross, He had accomplished what He had said only a few hours earlier when He was in prayer to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane: “*I have glorified You [Father] on the earth. **I have finished the work that You gave Me to do***” (Jn 17:4).

G. Last words of trust:

“*And crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said, **‘Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit!’***” (Lk 23:46). Jesus again quoted from the Psalms in order to remind the people that He had fulfilled prophecy (See Ps 31:5). He not only fulfilled prophecy in reference to what He did in His ministry, but He also fulfilled prophecy in reference to statements that were said in prophecy.

This statement infers that Jesus lived in compliance with the will of the Father throughout His ministry. He was confident in His obedience. He could thus confidently relinquish His spirit into the hands of the Father, whom He trusted

could take it from there. We read the same sentiment in the words of Stephen when he was stoned to death by an angry mob: “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*” (At 7:59). After Stephen said these words, “*he fell asleep*” (At 7:60). And Jesus, after He had uttered His last words, “*breathed His last*” (Lk 23:46). Both trusted that the Father and Son could assume responsibility of their destiny in eternity.

We see in the final words of Jesus and Stephen their confidence in their final destiny. Such assurance should be

characteristic of every disciple who nears his final breath. In our final hours, we seek to have the same confidence as Paul after he had endured tremendous hardships in order to finish his business:

*I have fought the good fight. **I have finished my course** [business]. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day, and not only to me, **but also to all those who have loved His appearing** (2 Tm 4:7,8).*

Chapter 6

JESUS LIVES!

The totality of Christianity depends on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If Jesus were not raised from the dead, then we, as Christians, are no better in our faith than those world religions that make no mention of Jesus in their religious documents. And those religions that do consider Jesus to be just another good prophet in a line of prophets, are just as valid as Christianity. It is then true, as Paul wrote, “*We are of all men most to be pitied*” (1 Co 15:19). We should be pitied because we believe that our Founder was raised from the dead.

It is imperative that the resurrection of Jesus continues to be the validation of Christianity. It is the resurrection that confirms our faith to be the only faith that is accepted by God because its founder is alive and not dead. The fact that He lives is important because our faith would

be null and void if Jesus’ body still remained in some hidden tomb in Palestine.

It is this faith that is the unchanging foundation for moral societies. “*For the grace of God ... has appeared to all men, **teaching us, that ... we should live sensibly, righteously and godly***” (Ti 2:11,12). If Jesus is still dead somewhere in a tomb outside Jerusalem, then any moral behavior that society would so choose is justified according to the dictates of society. If He is still in the tomb, then any other teacher or philosopher in the world has a right to offer his own code of morals for social behavior. After WW II when Adolf Eichmann was on trial for genocide, he said at the Nuremburg trials in 1945/46 that Hitler’s genocide of the Jews was right for the times in Europe. If Jesus were not raised from the

dead, then there can be no moral argument against the moral code of Nazi Germany at that time in history. If one would seek to live in adultery, then there is no reason to argue against such on the basis of morals. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, it is every society for itself, and every citizen within society for himself.

But if He is alive from the dead, then everything changes. The destiny of each citizen of this world changes. Humanity is on earth for a purpose beyond the thinking, *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”* (1 Co 15:32). If Jesus were raised from the dead, then eventually ...

... we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Co 5:10).

A. Early documents of the resurrection:

Luke 24:1-9 is significant. At the tomb of Jesus early on Sunday morning, two men in shining clothes made a profound statement to the women who had come to finalize the burial preparations of the crucified Jesus. The two men said, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* (Lk 24:5). Jesus was “among the dead.” But that was no longer so. And since He was resurrected early on Sunday, He did not hang around the tomb. He was raised and gone. The history of the world changed from that moment on. When that grave stone rolled away from a borrowed tomb, the world rolled into a

new paradigm of history.

Throughout the documents of Matthew, Mark, and John, we are privileged to have written testimonies of men who personally walked with Jesus in preparation for the empty tomb. When the writers of these historical documents recorded the final days of Jesus, they made certain that there was more written information about the final days of Jesus than any other man who has lived on earth. But we must keep in mind that the documents of the ministry of Jesus, and particularly His final days, do not explain the resurrection. They lead us to the resurrection. **It is the resurrection itself that explains the ministry of Jesus and the final days.** Without the resurrection, the witnesses of the ministry of Jesus would be worthless in reference to faith. There would be no reason to believe that Jesus was any more than a clever deceiver if it were not for the resurrection.

B. Prophecy of the resurrection:

Jesus prepared His disciples for the surreal event of His resurrection. His preparation began first with His own statements, and then with a real life illustration through the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11).

A little after midway through His ministry, and after He had called on the twelve disciples to agree with the confession of Peter, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Mt 16:16), Jesus changed in His ministry in reference to His disciples. Matthew explained:

From that time—[the time of the confession of Peter]—*Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day* (Mt 16:21).

Brief revelational lights were being turned on in the disciples' minds even before this paradigm shift in His relational ministry with the twelve. A little more than a year earlier, and upon His first visit to Jerusalem for the Passover, He said to the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem, "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up*" (Jn 2:19).

Neither the Jews, nor the disciples, understood what Jesus meant in this statement. In fact, it was many years later when John, who was there at the time Jesus made the statement, explained what Jesus meant. Note what John wrote:

Therefore, when He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this. And they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had said (Jn 2:22).

And then there was Jesus' reference to Jonah. "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Mt 12:40). To the scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus made this prophecy, the statement was certainly to them senseless talk on the part of Jesus. Nevertheless, as with the disciples, Jesus

was also preparing the religious community in Judea for His resurrection that was coming.

It would be from five to six years after the resurrection, and Peter's declaration on Pentecost that Jesus was raised, that "*a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*" (At 6:7). For these priests of the religious establishment of Jerusalem, it took some time for the fact of the resurrection to sink in. Nevertheless, it finally did, and the result was that many priests in Jerusalem gave up their salaries as priests of Judaism in order to become disciples of Jesus. The extent of their sacrifice indicated that they truly believed that Jesus was raised from the dead.

The crucifixion of Jesus was no accident as some have claimed. Jesus came with the intention of laying down His life, regardless of whether most of the Jews would accept Him as the Messiah (Jn 1:11). He once said to an inquiring audience, "*Therefore, My Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may take it up again*" (Jn 10:17). And just in case this was not clear, He continued: "*No one takes it [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again*" (Jn 10:18). And because He took it up again, millions have believed who He said He was. Because of this belief, millions have obeyed the gospel.

C. Centrality of the resurrection:

God would not raise an imposter. Therefore, if Jesus were raised, then we

must conclude that He was not an imposter. And if He is not an imposter, then He demands the totality of our lives, for He was the One He said He was, that is, the Son of God.

Jesus, the Son of God, was “*declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead*” (Rm 1:4). The power of the resurrection empowered Jesus to be who He said He was. For this reason, John S. Whale was right: “Belief in the resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith; **it is the Christian faith.**” There is no sense in claiming to be a Christian if one does not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. In fact, there is no reason to claim to be a Christian if Jesus never stepped one foot outside that tomb.

Because the early disciples believed that Jesus was no longer among the dead, their lives were radically changed. The resurrection became the foundation upon which they were moved into all the world. The centrality of their gospel message depended on the resurrection of Jesus, and thus, because Jesus lived, they had a living message of good news.

Though Paul did not personally experience the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, He was convicted by a living Jesus on a road to Damascus. After three days of repentance in the city of Damascus, and finally washing away his sins in baptism, he headed out for Arabia, and then back home to his family in Cilicia. He wrote to the Corinthians,

*For I delivered to you **first** of all that which I also received, that Christ died*

*for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, **and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures** (1 Co 15:3,4).*

The gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection, was the central message of the early disciples. This gospel validation of the new faith began with Peter on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. “*This Jesus,*” Peter proclaimed to the thousands on Pentecost, “**God has raised up**” (At 2:32). Paul later wrote that God “*worked in Christ when **He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places***” (Ep 1:20).

After the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples were disillusioned. They were disheartened and felt as Peter when he said, “*I am going fishing*” (Jn 21:3). But after the resurrection, they were going into all the world (Mt 28:19). The gospel of Jesus’ death for our sins and His resurrection was their motivation to go into all the world. We are Christians today because those early witnesses to the living Jesus went forth and explained to the world what one of them wrote of the resurrected Jesus in 1 John 1:1:

*That which was from the beginning, that **we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, that we have looked upon and our hands have handled, we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.***

D. Validation of the resurrection:

Theories to explain away the resur-

rection actually work to validate the resurrection. There have been some very imaginative theories presented throughout history to explain away the resurrection. All these theories have certainly made us research every angle of possibility that Jesus was not actually raised from the dead. The advantage of all these theories, therefore, is that they have forced us to answer every question that someone might present in order to deny the resurrection.

1. *The stolen body theory:* This was the first objection to the resurrection immediately after the tomb guards discovered that Jesus had escaped their custody (Mt 28:11-15). The cover-up scheme was invented by the religious leaders in Jerusalem who had actually called for the crucifixion of Jesus.

When the comatose guards at Jesus' tomb reported all that had transpired at the tomb, the Jewish elders "*consulted together,*" and then they gave a large sum of money to the guards (Mt 28:12). They then said that the guards were to lie. "*You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept'*" (Mt 28:13).

If these were Roman guards, then sleeping on duty incurred the penalty of death. If the disciples did indeed try to steal the body of Jesus, then there would have been a great deal of noise as they rolled back the large stone at the face of the tomb. And then, if the guards were asleep, how would they have known that it was the disciples who stole the body of Jesus?

The cover-up scheme of the Jewish elders is actually proof that something transpired at the tomb. Jesus' body was indeed gone, but they had no answer as to why it disappeared. If the disciples had indeed stolen the body, we would certainly assume correctly that when the heat of persecution later came upon the disciples, someone would have confessed that they had actually stolen the body. But James was willing to die for his belief that Jesus was actually raised (At 12:1,2). Stephen was willing to be stoned to death (At 7:59,60). And the early disciples as a whole were scattered out of Jerusalem because of persecution for their belief in the gospel of the resurrection (At 8:4). If the disciples had actually conspired to steal away the body of Jesus, then we would certainly conclude that such a theory was unlikely.

2. *The swoon theory:* This may be going to extremes in order to generate a possible reason for the disappearance of the body of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is a theory that has been set forth by some in the past concerning the absence of the body in the tomb. It has been argued that Jesus never really died on the cross. He only lapsed into a coma, or fainted, and then revived later in the coolness of the tomb.

This fanciful theory does not take into consideration the presence of the guards on the outside of the tomb. Neither does it give us an answer as to how a person who was so weakened by crucifixion could roll away a possibly two-ton stone from the entrance of the tomb. And then after moving the stone, sneak-

ing past the guards, He somehow had the strength to walk a great distance to be with the disciples in the city. But we know He did not go to the disciples as a wounded man, for the women came early on first day of the week in order to dress His body properly for final rest. If Jesus had regained consciousness in the tomb and gone to the disciples, then there would have been no reason for the women to go to the tomb early on Sunday morning.

The soldiers who crucified Jesus wanted to make sure that Jesus was indeed dead. There was first the breaking of the legs of the two who were crucified with Jesus in order to hasten their death. But they did not break the legs of Jesus, testifying to the fact that they determined that He was already dead. And then to make sure He was dead, a soldier pierced the side of Jesus with a sword (Jn 19:33,34).

3. *The vision theory:* This is the supposition that the disciples were so anxious for His resurrection that they hallucinated, or saw a vision of Him being alive. Sometimes theories that deny the resurrection become so ridiculous that they need no consideration. But let us suppose that such were possibly true.

If the theory is true, then there are some real problems. The first obvious problem is that the disciples did not expect the resurrection. They did not understand what Jesus meant when He spoke of His resurrection during His ministry (Jn 2:22). Though Jesus had previously discussed the matter with them, they were despondent after the crucifix-

ion. And despondent people do not conjure up images of Jesus being alive. There is then the testimony of John who wrote many years later of “doubting Thomas” who would not believe unless he had actually put his fingers in the nail holes of Jesus’ hands and his hand in His side (See Jn 20:24-29). In conjunction with the testimony of the immediate disciples, Paul added that Jesus appeared at one time to over five hundred people (1 Co 15:6). Did all those people see a vision simultaneously?

Then we must question why the visions ended after the ascension. And if the disciples had actually seen a vision of Jesus, why did not someone in Jerusalem produce the body of Jesus when Peter stood up and proclaimed to several thousand people, “*This Jesus God has raised up*” (At 2:32). If the body of Jesus was produced, this would certainly have been embarrassing and the end of the apostles’ claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead. It would have been the end of Christianity before it was started. But no body could be produced. There could be no valid denial of the resurrection if no body could be produced.

Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the United States. He was a complete skeptic in reference to anything ever having happened in history that was supernatural. But he honored the moral teachings of Jesus in the Bible. So what does a true naturalist do in order to separate the moral teachings of Jesus from the supernatural events that surrounded His life on earth?

Jefferson eliminated all references to the supernatural in his Bible. He cut these passages out of the Bible, and then published his own Bible, which Bible was called the "Jefferson Bible." At the close of his Bible, and in reference to the end of the life of Jesus, the Jefferson Bible simply reads, "There they laid Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre and departed."

We are sure that Jefferson has since changed his mind on this matter. To Jefferson, that was the end of the story

about Jesus, but the story did not end there. The fact that thousands believed immediately after the resurrection is the greatest evidence for the resurrection.

Man-made religions that are based on fables are developed over decades. But Christianity came to life in only one day when thousands believed immediately that Jesus was truly raised from the dead. These thousands were willing to go to their death because they believed that He was alive from the dead (See Rv 2:10).

Chapter 7

JESUS' DISCIPLE!

The Greek word that is translated "disciple" in Matthew 28:19 is a **verb**. It is thus a word of function with the expectation of results. The word "going" in the same text is a participle. After the disciples of Jesus experienced the gospel of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, He knew that they were going somewhere to tell everyone they encountered that Jesus was alive, and thus the Savior of the world. They needed no command to go. So in their motivated going because they finally believed (Mk 16:14), their task was to disciple people to Jesus. They were to disciple those to whom they preached the incarnational offering of the Son of God for our sins, His death, and the proof He continues to live by His resurrection and ascension. The text of Matthew 28:19,20 is all about motivation. They were going forth with the resurrectional power of the gospel in order

to motivate people unto being disciples of Jesus.

If the gospel were only facts to be believed, then it would lose its power to change lives. There would be no power in the gospel if it were only about facts and events to be believed. There were indeed facts and events, but the facts and events were the revelation of the heart of God that was crucified on the cross. It was thus this crucifixion for the sins of the world that was the motivation that would persuade people to be disciples of Jesus.

The gospel is first the power of God in reference to our salvational needs (Rm 1:16). However, because it is so powerful in reference to salvational matters, it cuts right to the heart (motives) of the individual (At 2:37). Everyone who believes the gospel, therefore, should respond with action if they truly believe.

True belief in the gospel demands a positive response, and that response is discipleship. What Jesus was saying in the text of Matthew 28:19,20 was the same thing He said in Mark 16:15,16. There is no reason to talk about being baptized if there is no belief. Likewise, there can be no baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit if there is no commitment to being a disciple of Jesus. True belief always inspires discipleship.

And then we should add the text of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. Paul explained that Jesus is coming again *“in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Th 1:8). If one does not believe, he will never respond to the heart of God through obedience to the gospel. Those who do not know God, therefore, will not obey the gospel by being baptized into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:3-6). This is exactly what Jesus meant in Mark 16:15. In fact, when we add the commission of Matthew 28:19,20, those who do not know God will not be baptized into an eternal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One will not be baptized in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit whom they do not know. Discipleship, therefore, is knowing the one true and living God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A. Initial responses to the gospel:

Those on the A.D. 30 Pentecost in Acts 2 first believed the message of the

gospel that Peter presented. But because of their belief in the gospel, they were cut to the heart (At 2:37). They were cut to the heart because they discovered the heart of God that they had crucified seven weeks before.

Because they were cut to the very motives of what determined their relationship with God, they responded: *“Men and brethren, what will we do?”* (At 2:37). The word “do” revealed that they knew that something beyond belief had to take place in their lives. Something drastic had to be done because they had done a drastic deed in crucifying the heart of God. Since they were cut to the heart because of their belief in the message of the gospel, response was demanded. They had to become repentant disciples. Subsequently, an answer to their response of belief was given: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you ...”* (At 2:38).

Peter informed them that water (baptism) was involved. Being cut to the heart by the gospel meant that their belief must move them to obedience of the gospel, which indeed happened on that memorial day. About 3,000 were discipled to Jesus through faith, and then they received the remission of sins in the waters of baptism (At 2:41). Matthew 28:19,20 and Mark 16:15,16 were enacted on that day for the first time in history in order that repentant believers might escape the coming vengeance of the One whom God raised up to sit at His right hand (2 Th 1:6-9).

B. Discipleship in response to the gospel:

Before we come to the A.D. 30 Pentecost of Acts 2, we must go back to statements that Jesus made during His ministry and before the 3,000 headed for the water. Throughout His ministry of teaching, Jesus was preparing the apostles to give a right answer to those who believed and would respond to the power of the gospel. It is significant to see in the response of those on Pentecost the very things that Jesus previously taught in reference to a response to the gospel. The **order** of response is important. So we go back about two months before Peter gave the instructions of Acts 2.

Before His ascension, Jesus gave a very significant explanation of what transpired on the day of Pentecost. He gave the following important instructions to a group of apostles who could not wait to go forth and tell everyone that the One in whom they had believed had been raised from the dead:

*Going, therefore, **disciple** all the nations, **baptizing** them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Mt 28:19,20).*

Their “work order” was important as they went into all the world to preach the gospel. They were first to disciple, then baptize, and then continue teaching. We must not miss the significance of this order. Discipling came **before** the baptizing. **No one’s foot was to step into the water until a commitment had been made to follow Jesus.** And no one could truly follow Jesus until they knew

the God who would sacrifice His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16).

As stated before, in Matthew 28:19 the Greek word “disciple” is used in its verb form. It is an action word that refers to becoming a follower of Jesus in response to believing the gospel of God’s heart. The apostles in this context were instructed to disciple. Discipling infers that someone is being disciplined to follow Jesus in response to their being cut to the heart by the gospel.

An individual is first disciplined, and then he does what those on the day of Pentecost were instructed to do (At 2:38,41). In response to the gospel message, one naturally asks what to do. Discipling involves being cut to the heart by the gospel, but it also involves doing something in response to being cut to the heart. In other words, the only outward evidence that we would have of one being cut to the heart would be his or her follow-up of doing what Peter instructed in Acts 2:38. True belief is always signalled to others with a splash in water. Therefore, because of belief one must first make a commitment to be a disciple, and then he or she can put his or her feet in the water. The water must always signal discipleship.

Discipleship **does not** happen in the water. Before the water, a personal commitment to be a disciple must first be made, and then by immersion in the water God does His part in cleaning up those who are disciples to Jesus (At 22:16). It is not the water first, and then commitment to discipleship. It is not first God’s work (remission of sins - At 2:38), and

then our commitment. This would change the order of what Jesus instructed. Disciples are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, and then they are taught. It is not that people are baptized, and then taught to be disciples of Jesus.

C. The motive for discipleship:

So we stay close to the ascension of Jesus and His last instructions to the apostles. On another occasion than that of Matthew 28:19,20, Jesus made a direct statement in reference to the disciples' going forth.

*Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to every creature. He who **believes** and is **baptized** will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned (Mk 16:15,16).*

Jesus' meaning in this statement is the same as the Matthew 28 commission, but another motive on the road to discipleship is added. Belief is the motivation. The emphasis of the Mark 16 commission indicates that these instructions were made before the Matthew 28 commission. In other words, Jesus first emphasized belief, and then He spoke of that which belief must motivate, that is, discipleship.

In the Matthew 28 account, the "going" was assumed since the Greek word is a participle. In the Mark 16 commission, "going" is also a participle. Both accounts assume that the disciples had been motivated to go into all the world with the message of the gospel in order

to generate belief and discipleship.

What is significant in the Mark 16 commission is that the disciples are specifically commanded to "*preach the gospel.*" In the Matthew 28 record, it is assumed that they would, for the gospel was the motivation for their "going." It is thus the gospel that is the motive for discipleship, and thus, the continuation of the instructions that Jesus gave personally to the eleven at the time of both the Matthew 28 and Mark 16 commission. It is the gospel that cuts people to the heart.

And thus it was the gospel that Peter preached on the A.D. 30 Pentecost that motivated the people to act on what they had heard. Add to this the realization that those Jews on Pentecost finally began to know the true God of heaven who had a heart for all people, not just the Jews (At 10:34,35; 2 Pt 3:9). This God did not want anyone to perish, including the Gentiles. Being cocooned in their own Judaism, this was the God of love they did not fully understand. He was the God who so loved the entire world that He gave His only begotten Son, the very Son for whom they had called to be crucified (Jn 3:16).

Discipleship to Jesus assumes that people believe the gospel that is preached. It assumes that one discovers the true heart of God, and in doing so, discovers the one true and living God. As in the Matthew 28 instructions, belief and discipleship all take place before one can come into an eternal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the Mark 16 instructions, Jesus added a greater explanation in reference

to one's response to the preached gospel. If one does not believe the message of the gospel, then certainly he will not be discipled to Jesus. And if he is not discipled to Jesus, then certainly he will keep his feet out of the water. He will not obey the gospel (See 2 Th 1:8).

If there is no belief, then there will be no request as those on Pentecost: "*Men and brethren, what will we do?*" Or in the words of the Ethiopian eunuch, "*See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized*" (At 8:36). There is no cutting to the heart if there is no understanding of the God who gave His incarnate Son for the sins of the world. Without this belief that cuts to the heart, there is no need for water, for one is not committed to being a disciple of Jesus if his belief is not strong enough to move him to respond to the God who gave of Himself for us.

In one statement Jesus prepared everyone for Him to be the medium through whom all who hear the gospel will know God: "*And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (Jn 17:3). One can have eternal life only by knowing, and responding to the only true God. One can know this God only through Jesus Christ who was sent into the world. Therefore, only if one believes on Jesus Christ can he or she know God, and thus respond to the gospel. Only through obedience to this gospel can one come into the eternal life that is offered through Jesus. It was for this reason that the Holy Spirit proclaimed through Peter, "*And there is sal-*

vation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (At 4:12).

D. Responses to the gospel:

This brings us to how quickly the gospel can impact the heart of an individual. The religious condition of the heart of the one to whom the gospel is preached often determines how soon he or she will respond to the gospel. For some in the first century, the response was the "same hour of the night." But for others, as many priests in Jerusalem, it took three or four years before they came to terms with the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and what such would mean in their lives. They had to transition their thinking concerning who God was. He was not a God of law and condemnation. He was a God of love who was extending His heart to all men through the grace of the cross.

1. The Pentecost response to the gospel: It was early in the morning on the A.D. 30 Pentecost when eleven of the apostles stood up to lay the groundwork for what Peter would conclude (At 2:13,14). We are not told how long the eleven preached before Peter stood up. But with the privilege of the "keys" to unlock entrance into the kingdom reign of Jesus (Mt 16:18,19), Peter stood up and affirmed the gospel message that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ) who fulfilled all prophecy in reference to the Messiah (See Lk 24:44). He was now reigning from heaven on David's throne

(At 2:14-35). Peter reminded the stunned Jewish audience that the One for whom they had been waiting for centuries was the One they had seven weeks before crucified on a cross (At 2:36). This Jesus was now Lord over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-23).

In this case, the response to discipleship of about 3,000 was immediate. That very day those who believed, obediently went to the water to wash away their sins (At 2:41). If Peter's announcement came at midday, then by the end of the day about 3,000 disciples had obeyed the gospel. Those who responded "*were devout men out of every nation under heaven*" (At 2:5). They were Jews who had traveled from many distant nations in order to be in Jerusalem for the annual Passover/Pentecost feast. When they heard the liberating message of the gospel, therefore, their response was immediate.

Because of their long journey to Jerusalem, they had proved their discipleship of the Father. In only a few hours, and with one message of the gospel, they transferred their discipleship to the One who was at that time seated in heaven on the throne of David. So by the close of the day, about 3,000 had made this paradigm shift from the kingship of the Father to the kingship of the Son (See Cl 1:13).

2. A jailor's response to the gospel: Paul and Silas ended up in jail in Philippi. They sat in cold jail cells singing gospel songs, with an audience that was intently listening to the message of the songs and their prayers (At 16:25).

An earthquake occurred, and the doors of the jail cells were thrown open (At 16:26). The jailor, who was trembling with fear, "*fell down before Paul and Silas*" (At 16:29). He, as well as the prisoners, had heard the gospel message of the songs, and the prayers of both Paul and Silas. So he asked, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (At 16:30). Paul gave an answer that one would naturally give to a religious idolater. It was an answer that was given after the instructions of Jesus' Mark 16:15 commission. It was the first step to discipleship: "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved***" (At 16:31). So that same hour of the night, "*he was baptized, he and all his household*" (At 16:33).

It took the jailor only a short time to hear and respond to the gospel. In the same hour of the night when Paul and Silas were released from their jail cells, he and his household obeyed the gospel. He first believed, as Jesus had before stated (Mk 16:15,16). He was then baptized because he had chosen to be a disciple of Jesus that very night. His commitment to discipleship assumed that he was previously a very religious person, as well as all his household.

3. The eunuch's response to the gospel: As the Ethiopian eunuch returned from worshiping in Jerusalem, he was reading the gospel message of Isaiah 53. He had surely encountered some Christians in Jerusalem who were teaching the gospel daily in the temple courtyard (At 2:46; 5:42). He was thus confused concerning the One about whom Isaiah had

prophesied (At 8:34). When a gospel preacher walked up from the desert, the opportunity to hear about Jesus presented itself to a very religious person (At 8:35). Philip *"preached Jesus to him"* (At 8:35).

We do not know how long the teaching carried on as the two continued to travel down the road in the chariot. But in reference to the religious nature of the eunuch, we must remember that he had traveled all the way from Ethiopia in order to worship in Jerusalem. He was as those devoted Jews who had traveled hundreds of kilometers to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. He was a very dedicated person, and thus his discipleship to the Father was likewise transferred to the Son after his encounter with Philip. Once this transfer was made in his mind, it was then that he was ready for the water. *"Now as they went along the road they came to some water. And the eunuch said 'See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized'"* (At 8:36).

It did not take the eunuch long to decide to respond to the gospel. He evidently knew all the prophecies. Philip only connected all the dots between the prophecies and Jesus. In Jerusalem, when the Christians taught that Jesus was the Messiah, the eunuch began his process of becoming a disciple. Philip only concluded what the eunuch needed to have reconfirmed, that Isaiah's prophecy was about Jesus. It was then *"that they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him"* (At 8:38).

4. Saul's response to the gospel:

For a few years after the A.D. 30 Pentecost, Saul led a vehement attack against the disciples. All the time he was leading disciples to prison, he was listening to their testimonies that Jesus was the Messiah. But Saul fought against this belief. Though he knew what the Christians taught, he refused to accept the testimony of those whom he persecuted.

However, on a Damascus road it was time for the light to come on in the mind of Saul. A great light appeared from heaven and he fell to the ground. After regaining his senses, he asked, *"Who are you, Lord?"* (At 9:5). The answer was the beginning of his transformation to becoming a disciple of Jesus. *"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,"* the voice answered (At 9:5). He was instructed by Jesus to go on to Damascus and wait. So he went and waited. He waited for three days (At 9:9). It was only after three days that the Lord sent Ananias, who came and said to Saul, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins"* (At 22:16).

Jesus gave Saul three days to make a mental paradigm shift from persecuting Jesus to preaching Jesus. It was only after Saul/Paul had made the commitment to be a disciple of Jesus that he submitted to the water in order to wash away his sins. Before he even came close to the water, Jesus wanted Saul, in blindness, to rethink all his past life and to consider all the persecution that was before him (At 9:15,16). He needed to commit to being a disciple before being baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. *The priests' response to the gospel:* About five to six years after the A.D. 30 Pentecost, a very significant historical response to the gospel happened in Jerusalem that was recorded by Luke in Acts 6:7: “*So the word of God increased. And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*”

Throughout the years that followed the A.D. 30 Pentecost, there were many priests, as Nicodemus, who were contemplating the fact that Jesus was the Christ, and thus the Savior of the world. They simply could not explain away the resurrection of Jesus. However, because of the social pressures of the Jewish establishment, it took them a great deal of time to decide to become disciples of Jesus.

We must not underestimate the commitment of these many priests who became disciples of Jesus. Being Levitical priests under the Sinai law, they would have been supported by the religious establishment at the time. But when they made the decision to become disciples of Jesus, they became disciples of the One who nailed the Sinai law to the cross (See Cl 2:14). **Jesus nailed their financial source of income to the cross.** In other words, the cost of their

discipleship cost them their jobs. When Jesus said, “*Whoever of you who does not forsake all that he has, cannot be My disciple,*” these priests took a long time to consider this point (Lk 14:33). We would suppose that they had some lengthy discussions with their wives before they made their way to the water. It may have taken them a great deal of time to secure other work in order to support their families before they made the final commitment to be disciples of Jesus. Regardless of their financial struggles, they made the commitment, and then headed to the water.

The cost of discipleship can be great. For this reason, anyone who would seek to be a disciple of Jesus must seriously count the cost. Jesus' lengthy discussion on counting the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25-35 infers that one not make a hasty decision to step in the water. Discipleship involves a tremendous commitment on the part of some, depending on one's existing circumstances at the time he or she initially hears the gospel. But regardless of the cost, no price is too high in comparison to that which one will eventually receive in eternal glory (See Rm 8:18).

Chapter 8

JESUS GOES VIRAL!

Jesus encouraged His disciples to live the gospel of His incarnational offering before a world that was in the throes of spiritual death (Mt 5:16; Ph 2:5-

9). While living in a world without hope, He encouraged them to give hope through His resurrection, ascension, and the fact that He was coming again for all those

who had in His name believed and were baptized into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This was gospel living according to His glorious gospel that He had brought into the world. Their lives were thus the gospel message that would turn the world upside down (See At 17:6).

The same is continuing today. In 1979, C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton published a book entitled *Unreached Peoples, '79*. At the time when the book was published (1979), the authors said of the four billion people living on earth, "One billion people name Jesus as Lord. One billion people may have heard of Him. **Two billion people have never heard His name.**" Since that time the world population has grown to over seven billion people. The good news is that today almost the entire world of over seven billion people have heard the name of Jesus.

It is true that the ingenuity of men will lead to the invention of all sorts of things that will make a profit for man. But we must not forget that in the area of news media and information flow, the inventions of men have accelerated the Christian's opportunity to preach the name of Jesus throughout the world. The printing press was invented, and subsequently newspapers were printed and distributed locally to propagate information. But newspapers were also used by Christians to get the gospel message to the people. Then came the radio. The preaching of the gospel through radio messages moved gospel preachers beyond local regions and into states and

nations. National radio broadcasts allowed the preachers of the gospel to broadcast the message of the gospel to millions. Then came television. The gospel through this news media was also used to proclaim the gospel to the masses. But none of these previous mediums of mass media have matched the opportunity of the Internet to take the gospel to billions of people.

The Internet has become the media vehicle through which a single disciple of Jesus can reach millions. Not only is the gospel preached to millions, and disciples made, but the Internet is a unique and inexpensive medium by which baptized disciples can be taught "*all things that I have commanded you*" (Mt 28:20). Through this media alone, the name of Jesus is being held high before an unbelieving world. We can truly say today that we are living in the ideal world for evangelism by which the company of God's saints can reach the entire world.

At the time of this writing there are over two billion people who are registered on Facebook alone. Facebook was originally "invented" by those who wanted to bring friends and family together in communication with one another. But for the disciple of Jesus, "posts" to friends and family on Facebook timelines are being used by thousands to preach Jesus and His word.

God made it possible for the "invention" of electronic media as smartphones, computers, websites, Facebook, Snapchat, blogging, etc. so that we as Christians might be able to influence our friends, families, and the

whole world for Jesus. These electronic means of communication allow us the opportunity to be moved into all the world to every creature by bringing all the world into our own homes. World evangelism is now possible by the click of a mouse.

The following are some reasons why Christians, in following Jesus as His disciples, should be using every means to go into all the world:

A. Jesus moved the gospel beyond the limitations of the first recipients.

When Jesus was personally with His disciples, He sent them out on many “limited commissions.” Their audience was limited to those to whom Jesus first came into the world with the gospel message. *“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Mt 10:6).

Those days are long gone. The billions of the world today exemplify how limited that commission was and how vast ours is. However, at that time Jesus knew what He was doing. When God wants to do big things, He always starts small. In the beginning, He started with only two people to populate an entire world. He started with only eleven disciples—one of them dropped out—in order to accomplish the global commissions of Matthew 28:19,20 and Mark 16:15,16. These two texts of commission moved the disciples beyond Israel and far into all the world. Though during His early ministry Jesus limited the disciples to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” by the time of His ascension,

He had given them a worldwide mission.

Immediately after His resurrection, the disciples made the long journey back to Galilee (Mt 28:16). They went there *“to the mountain which Jesus had designated”* (Mt 28:16). At the time when Jesus came to them, some immediately fell down and worshiped Him even as He approached them from a distance. But some did not recognize (believe) that it was Jesus Himself coming to them. The Greek word in Matthew 28:18 that is simply translated “came” in some versions, actually means to “come near.” Jesus came near to them in order to erase all doubt that it was truly Him who lived. It was then that He turned a limited commission into a worldwide endeavor to preach the gospel to the entire world. Once the surreal experience of His resurrection had finally sunk in, they were motivated to go tell others that He was alive.

B. Jesus moved the world under His authority through the gospel.

Daniel had prophesied the foundation upon which Jesus had the right to commission His saints to disciple the entire world unto His kingdom reign. In a vision, Daniel saw *“One like the Son of Man”* (Dn 7:13). This Son of Man ascended to the Father in heaven. *“And there was given Him dominion and glory and sovereignty, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him”* (Dn 7:14).

Those on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 recalled Daniel’s prophecy when

Peter reminded them: “*This Jesus God has raised up*” (At 2:32). “*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (At 2:36). When this statement was made by Peter, Jesus had been raised and was seated at the right hand of God in heavenly places (Hb 8:1). He was at the time of Peter’s proclamation, reigning with all authority over all things (Ep 1:20-23). He went to be crowned as King of kings and was seated on the throne of David. He was there waiting for the official announcement on earth by the apostle Peter, which announcement was made on that A.D. 30 Pentecost.

During His early ministry, Jesus was a king in prospect for His coronation. He knew that He was headed for the throne of David at the right hand of God (See Mt 11:27; Jn 3:35; 13:3; 17:2). Because He knew that all things had been given into His hand, He spoke to the people with the authority of a king (Mt 7:29; 9:6). When He ascended to the Father in fulfillment of the Daniel 7:13,14 prophecy, He assumed the ministry of exercising the authority of a reigning king (See Jn 12:48). He is now Lord of lords, and King of all kings (1 Tm 6:15). All who would be obedient subjects of His kingdom reign over all things must obey the gospel.

While yet on earth at the end of His ministry, Jesus came to the disciples on the occasion of Matthew 28:18 with an announcement of His kingdom reign. He came with the authority to mandate a worldwide commission. It was after this

encounter with the disciples that He ascended to the Ancient of Days in fulfillment of the Daniel 7 prophecy. Paul later reminded the saints in Colosse of the galactic authority that Jesus assumed and began to exercise when He was seated at the right hand of the Father: “*And He is above all things and by Him all things hold together*” (Cl 1:17).

The French philosopher Rousseau wrote in *Emilius and Sophia*, “Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.” In all the skepticism of Rousseau against the religion of his day, at least he was right on this point.

While on earth, Jesus led men to confess, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Mt 16:16). As the Son of God, He lived without sin, for sin could be committed only against God (Hb 4:15). As God on earth, therefore, He personally forgave sin in order that we “*may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*” (Mt 9:6).

While on earth, He had the authority to unleash at will the power of the supernatural, knowing that only God has such power. Our conclusion of His earthly ministry is the same as that which Nicodemus confessed: “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*” (Jn 3:2; See Jn 10:38; At 2:22).

During His ministry on earth, Jesus taught with the authority of God’s word, for only God could speak with such authority (See Mt 7:28,29; 13:54; 22:33). In considering the life and ministry of

Jesus, we too, conclude as C. S. Lewis concluded his bestselling book entitled *Mere Christianity*:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.

C. **Jesus moved the world into Christ by moving the gospel into all the world.**

The word “going” in Matthew 28:19 is not only a participle, it is an aorist participle. It could thus be translated “having gone.” The instructions of Jesus in the context in reference to discipling those of the world is based on the fact that the disciples of Jesus were taking the initiative to go into all the world. Since the participle of the verse is contingent on the main verb, “make disciples,” which is aorist, the mood of the verb can be nothing but imperative. And so the Holy Spirit wanted us to understand the imperative of the mission that Jesus had for His disciples. Since the disciples were moving into all the world with the good news of the gospel, it was imperative that they speak the gospel that they had experienced. They must

do this in order to produce disciples who would commit to living the gospel in their relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since the gospel of Jesus had transformed their lives, Jesus commissioned them to preach the same gospel to change the lives of millions.

We must understand Matthew 28:19,20 on the foundation of conversion to a gospel life-style. By limiting our understanding to being “legally baptized,” we often miss the point that in the context Jesus was emphasizing relationships. He stated that before one could be baptized **into** (Gr., *eis*) a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he or she had to first be discipled into a relationship with Jesus through the gospel. The Greek word “into” (*eis*) in the passage is not the word “in” (*en*), as in baptized **in** the name of Jesus (At 2:38). *Eis* emphasizes being brought into a **connective relationship** with the one to whom one is discipled. When people are discipled into a relationship with Jesus through the gospel, it is only natural that through obedience to the gospel in baptism they connect in a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The urgency of the disciples’ mission was that they had the gospel message of a Savior unto whom they were to disciple people. And thus, their message was a saving message of bringing people into an eternal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The message was that Jesus was born to be the Savior of the world (Lk 2:10,11). He ministered the gospel message of Himself throughout Palestine that He was the Savior of

all those who would believe on Him (Mt 4:23; Lk 19:10; Jn 10:20). As the Savior, He taught the people about living the gospel (Jn 6:68). As a redeeming Savior, He offered Himself on the cross in order to bring His people into eternal dwelling with Himself (Jn 4:42; 1 Pt 2:24; 1 Jn 4:14). We would conclude that He lived without sin in order to have the purity to take upon Himself as the Savior, the sins of all those who would be born again into the realm of His redemption (Jn 3:3-5).

All that Jesus was in His incarnational revelation from heaven was that He be the redeeming Savior of the world. Through His fulfillment of all prophecy in reference to God being with us, He was proved to be the Savior of the world (Lk 24:44). He was proved to be a humble Savior by His lowly birth. Worn and torn sandals from trudging the pathways of Palestine revealed that He was a sincere Savior. Overcoming those who were resistant to His gospel message proved that He was a determined Savior. But it was through an open and empty tomb that He was proven to be a living Savior. When Frank Morison concluded the book, *Who Moved the Stone*, he made a profound conclusion:

There may be, as the writer thinks, then certainly is, a deep and profoundly historical basis for the much disputed sentence in the Apostles' Creed: "The third day he rose again from the dead."

The tomb, therefore, was not the end of Jesus' story. It was only a stopover for

the Savior of the world on His way back to the place from where He came in order to mediate as our great high priest (Rm 8:26; 1 Tm 2:5; Hb 7:25).

D. Jesus moved the world into a new hope through the preaching of the gospel.

It was as Paul wrote to a gospel preacher: "*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Christ Jesus who is our hope*" (1 Tm 1:1). The Lord Christ Jesus is the One unto whom we "*have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us*" (Hb 6:18). We have all fled to this hope because "*this hope we have as an anchor of the soul*" (Hb 6:19). Therefore, we walk "*in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began*" (Ti 1:2). Jesus is the only valid hope for a hopeless world.

Nevertheless, it is too often as an old religious woman told a newly arrived missionary to her village,

How long is it since Jesus died for sinful people? Look at me; I am old; I have prayed, given alms, gone to the holy shrines, become as dust from fasting and all this is useless. Where have you been all this time?

The old woman was as the proverb says, "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick*" (Pv 13:12). Too many times we have "deferred" hope from being preached to all the world because of our own indiffer-

ence, or possibly because of our own lack of hope.

Because of the news of the gospel, however, those who have a hopeless end have the opportunity to enjoy an endless hope. Since hope is the bread that brings life to spiritually poor people, then the Bread of Life is the only hope for a spiritually famished world. The hope that Jesus had given to the disciples motivated them to go into all the world. It was a hope that was beyond this world. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome, “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit*” (Rm 15:13). Christians must be reminded that there is hope “*laid up for you in heaven*” (Cl 1:5). They must not forget “*the hope of the gospel*” that they have obeyed (Cl 1:23). When we live the gospel, we are moved into all the world in order to share our hope with others. (The next time you are on your Facebook page, you must remember that you have an opportunity to share your hope of eternal life with your family and friends.)

The hope of the gospel is that Jesus is alive from the dead. Notice how Peter explained how the disciples first had their hopes dashed because of the crucifixion, but later revived again through the resurrection of Jesus: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Pt 1:3).

Theirs, as well as our hope, is living because He is living. It is this hope

of eternal life that creates within us the motivation to share the gospel of hope with others. Since there is hope of eternal life only in Jesus, the disciples of Jesus were moved into all the world (See At 4:12). The same happens today when the disciples of Jesus revive their living hope. When our hope is revived, then comes the inquiries from the world that has no hope. Peter explains:

But sanctify Christ as Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear (1 Pt 3:15).

E. Jesus moved the disciples to preach the gospel of hope to every ethnic group.

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to disciple “*all the nations,*” He actually used the Greek term that referred to **ethnic** groups. Ethnic groups are at least defined by different languages and cultures. There are over 32,000 such groups throughout the world today. The urgency of the commission, therefore, was that the disciples disciple, not simply nations with government borders, but all the ethnic groups that may be encompassed within those borders.

For example, there are over 140 languages and dialects in the country of Angola. Therefore, according to the commission of Jesus there are over 140 ethnic groups within Angola that must hear the hope of the gospel. In His commission of Mark 16:15, Jesus was even

more specific. Every creature within every ethnic group must have the opportunity to hear the gospel of hope.

We have sometimes emphasized the mandate of the commissions of Matthew 28:19,20 and Mark 16:15,16 to the point of ignoring the strategic importance of those to whom the saints of God must go. As stated before in the grammatical construction of the words, Jesus assumed that the disciples were going forth with the great news of the gospel that they had personally heard and experienced. But in the context of the two recorded commissions, Jesus wanted to direct the disciples' attention to those to whom they were to go. He wanted to make sure that they did as Paul reminded the Corinthians in his going to Achaia: "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel*" (1 Co 1:17). Baptizing on the part of the one being sent is easy. Baptizing results from preaching the gospel. But discipling every creature of every ethnic group in all the world before baptizing them is very challenging.

We must not lose our focus in our joy over baptizing people into Christ. Our priority is the gospel. Our message is the gospel. Our outreach is to disciple to Jesus those to whom we preach the gospel. The motivation by which people obey the gospel in baptism is the gospel. We are thus gospel preachers who disciple people to Jesus because they have believed the gospel. Those who believe the gospel are disciplined to Jesus, and then obey the gospel in baptism.

J. B. Phillips, in his book, *New Testament Christianity*, wrote a chapter of

fiction in the book that was entitled, "The Visited Planet." Phillips presented the situation where an older and younger angel were traveling at light speed throughout the galaxies. The older angel was introducing the younger angel to all the galaxies that were created by the Creator, but particularly he referred to one unique planet.

The younger angel questioned, "What is that little speck of dust circling that little star?"

The older angel replied, "Don't speak despairingly of that planet. It's the visited planet."

The younger angel was taken aback and questioned, "You mean that's where He went That's where the light went out but came back stronger."

As the two angels sped beyond that galaxy to another, the younger angel looked back and said, "Think of it, the visited planet."

And that is our message that moves us into all the world. Jesus was not just a good teacher. He was Deity who visited this planet for the purpose of opening a door for every creature to find his or her way into eternity. And now, we know how to answer the Holy Spirit's penetrating questions that He wrote to all who have obeyed the gospel:

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they

preach unless they are sent? (Rm 10:14,15).

The aged gospel preacher, H. Leo Boles, of the early part of the last century, wrote and published a commentary in 1911 on the book of Matthew. When he came to his comments of Jesus' commission of Matthew 28, he wrote,

He [Jesus] has all authority, all power, all wisdom, and he now gives to his disciples an aggressiveness in evangelizing

the world for him. They are to "make disciples of all the nations," that is, they are to "disciple" "all the nations"; that is, they are to preach the gospel and teach the people. To disciple a person to Christ is to lead that one to become a follower of Christ, to be a learner in his school, to be obedient to his commands, to become a Christian. To "make disciples" means to give all kinds of instruction for entrance into the church of our Lord (H. Leo Boles, *Commentary on Matthew*, 1911).

Chapter 9 JESUS IS KING!

When the king controls all things through the power of his word, then the subjects throughout the kingdom have peace of mind, regardless of the activities of the rebellious subjects of the kingdom. Faithful subjects have peace of mind as that which was described by David:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling (Ps 46:1-3; see Ph 4:7).

Jesus made a final encouraging statement to His disciples who were going into the midst of great persecution. His statement of Matthew 28:18 would

reassure them that He had everything under control: "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth.*"

There is no authority that is outside the control of the authority that Jesus now has, for He is "*far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come*" (Ep 1:21). It is a tremendous relief to know this!

We often think too much about earthly kings and kingdoms when we consider the statements concerning the kingship of Jesus and His reign over His galactic empire. We have a difficult time thinking beyond the metaphor of earthly kingdoms. We are sure that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a very limited, if not earthly understanding of what Gabriel announced to her concerning the coming birth of Jesus:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son. And you will call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Lk 1:31-33).

At least Pilate had no understanding of the extent of the kingship of Jesus when he asked Jesus, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” (Jn 18:33). In answer to Pilate’s question, Jesus made a statement that neither Pilate, nor most of his generation, ever understood: “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (Jn 18:36).

A metaphor is the use of an earthly word to refer to something greater than that which is of this earth. In Jesus’ answer to Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, He could not have been more definitive of the spiritual and heavenly nature of His kingdom.

There are those today who are in hope that Jesus will come to this world again for the purpose of establishing some earthly kingdom. But they ignore what Jesus said to Pilate. If Jesus were to come to this speck of galactic dust to reign as a king, then we would certainly conclude that He would give up His present vast kingdom reign with all authority over all galaxies. (Sometimes the carnality of our hopes is revealed through carnally oriented dreams that we will join Jesus in some reign over our enemies.)

When Jesus informed Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, then we

must conclude that Jesus’ kingship would never be earthly. Pilate, as well as all earthly kings, could continue to reign and govern with the sword over physical kingdoms. Jesus would take control only of the hearts of those He would encourage to honor the powers that existed with earthly kings (See Rm 13:1-7). The nature, glory and extent of Jesus’ kingdom, however, reaches far beyond any kingdom of this world.

Our encouragement comes from understanding the nature of Jesus’ present kingdom reign, and influence His reign has in our hearts. When we understand the totality of Jesus’ present reign in the hearts of the obedient, then we understand that the coming King is coming again for obedient subjects who have labored faithfully to the glory of the King. He is not coming to initiate another earthly kingdom. He is coming to deliver His subjects from all earthly kingdoms in order that they enjoy the eternal peace of God in a heavenly kingdom.

A. The nature of Jesus’ present kingdom reign:

David’s prophecy of Psalm 110:1 was a bright light, yet not clearly understood by many Jews in the first century, that the coming kingdom that God would establish would be based on heavenly authority. It would have heavenly origins, and thus be heavenly in nature: “*The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.’*”

In Daniel 7, Daniel was also privi-

leged with kingdom information in order to prepare the Israelites for a heavenly understanding of something that was coming. The Son of Man would ascend unto the Ancient of Days (God) where He would be given kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). According to all prophecies in the Old Testament, kingdom reign would be in heaven and not on this earth.

While Jesus was on earth, He was an uncrowned King who was yet to receive His coronation at the right hand of the Father. But when He ascended to the right hand of the Father according to the prophecies of both David and Daniel, He was the crowned King who now reigns over all things. He is now the Lord of the lords of this world, and the King of all kings of this world (1 Tm 6:15; Rv 17:14).

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter proclaimed that Jesus revealed the right of Jesus to be Lord and Christ when the Father raised Him up to seat Him on the throne of David. Gabriel's promise to Mary was fulfilled. God the Father had sworn to David *"with an oath that of the fruit of his body, He would seat one on his throne"* (At 2:30). Peter continued to remind the Jews on Pentecost of this oath to David. *"This Jesus,"* Peter affirmed, *"God has raised up"* (At 2:32). Jesus was exalted to *"the right hand of God"* (At 2:33).

What those with carnal hopes fail to understand is that the kingdom of Jesus was never meant to be of this world. The authority of David's throne was always with God in heaven. In other words, David had no authority on earth that was outside the authority of God from heaven.

And when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God in heaven, He ascended to the authority of the throne of David that was always in heaven. The kingdom of Jesus, therefore, has always been spiritual. Some Christians in Rome may have forgotten this fact about the true nature of the kingdom of Jesus. Paul wrote to them, *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Rm 14:17).

A spiritual kingdom is maintained by spiritual means. Carnal swords have no place in a spiritual kingdom. On the contrary, it is as Jesus explained in John 18:36. Love is the "power" that reigns among those who are subjects of Jesus' spiritual kingdom: *"A new commandment I give to you, **that you love one another;** as I have loved you, that you also love one another"* (Jn 13:34). Love would be the identity of those who would be obedient subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus. Jesus continued, *"By this [love of one another] **will all men know that you are My disciples**"* (Jn 13:35). The power of the kingdom reign of Jesus is unleashed through the power of the subjects' love for one another.

The spiritual nature of the subjects of the kingdom of Jesus is defined by love. And for this reason, there are no geographical borders, no carnal identities, and no limitations of how obedient subjects of the kingdom of Jesus influence the world in which they live. The power of the kingdom is through love.

When Jesus reigns in the hearts of men on earth as He reigns in heaven, then

the kingdom reign of Jesus manifests itself on earth (See Mt 6:9,10). This is a spiritual manifestation that is not revealed through carnal means. This is what Jesus meant in the following statement: “*The kingdom of God **does not come with observation***” (Lk 17:20). He was preparing His disciples during His ministry not to expect the arrival of His kingdom to be as the establishment of earthly kingdoms. For this reason, Jesus continued to explain to some inquiring Pharisees, “*Nor will they say, ‘Look here!’ Or, ‘Look there!’ For behold, **the kingdom of God is within you***” (Lk 17:21).

Christians now reign in life with Jesus because of His love that reigns in their hearts (Rm 5:17). As Christians live the gospel of love in their hearts, the only manifestation of the presence of Jesus’ kingdom reign on earth is the loving light that shines forth from those who are motivated to do that which is good to all men (Gl 6:10). As they were loved by Jesus through the cross, obedient subjects are moved by love to serve others. It is in their service of others that others know that Jesus is their King.

(For continued research concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus, download Book 9, *The Reign of Christ*, from the Biblical Research Library at the website, www.africainternational.org.)

B. The glory of Jesus’ kingdom reign in our hearts:

Not only was kingdom reign to be given to the One who ascended to the

Ancient of Days in Daniel’s prophecy, but He would also be given glory (Dn 7:14). The Son of God “*is the brightness of His glory*” (Hb 1:3). The Father “*crowned Him with glory and honor*” (Hb 2:7). Jesus was “*crowned with glory and honor, so that He by the grace of God might taste death for everyone*” (Hb 2:9). Therefore, He “*was counted worthy of more glory than Moses*” because He built the house of God on earth with His incarnational offering of Himself for the sins of the world (Hb 3:3; see 1 Tm 3:15).

In the second century, a Greek philosopher and antagonist of Christianity named Celsus said to Christians of his era, “What new thing has Christ given to the world?” The Christians of his time replied, “He gave Himself.”

Jesus came into the world with great teachings that uplifted humanity. However, if He were not raised from the dead, His teachings mean no more than those teachings of others who would offer their suggestions for good moral living as Confucius, Buddha or Muhammad. Jesus’ teachings through the hand of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John would only be dead letters if it were not for one historical fact. That fact is that **Jesus is not in a grave as all other religious teachers**. He is alive and reigning at the right hand of God. Because He was glorified through His conquest over the grave, His teachings rise to the highest standard by which men should direct their lives. Since He was raised, His teachings supercede all the teachings of philosophers and religious leaders of all history. In fact, Jesus authorized His own

teachings as the authority by which one will be eternally judged: “*The word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day*” (Jn 12:48).

Jesus was indeed the “*Lord of glory*” (1 Co 2:8). He was “*the image and glory of God*” among men on earth (1 Co 11:7). Through our obedience to the gospel, God has called us “*unto His kingdom and glory*” (1 Th 2:12). We were called by the gospel “*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Th 2:14). His glory mandates the obedience of the entire world to the word of Jesus. His glory must find a response in the lives of those who believe on Him

C. **The requirements of the subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus:**

Inherent in a prosperous kingdom are subjects who assume their responsibilities and duties as subjects. The successful reign of the king is determined by the relationship the subjects have with their king. The prosperity of the kingdom is dependent on the obedient relationship the subjects maintain with the ruling king. Therefore, for the prosperity of the kingdom reign of Jesus, the subjects must assume the following responsibilities since they have voluntarily submitted themselves to the reign of King Jesus in their hearts:

1. *The requirement of faith (trust):* Jesus’ first requirement of His subjects was revealed when He said to His immediate subjects, “*Believe in God, believe also in Me*” (Jn 14:1). What He

was saying was, “You trusted God, trust Me.” Belief, or trust, is the foundation upon which faithfulness of all subjects of the kingdom are identified. The subjects must trust that their king is qualified to lead and protect them. If there is no trust in the king, then the subjects of the kingdom live in apprehension and fear concerning their safety.

The Hebrew writer further explained, “***But without faith*** [trust] *it is impossible to please Him*” (Hb 11:6). The subjects of the kingdom must trust that their king is in control. This is what James meant when he wrote the following statement:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing (Js 1:2-4).

The reason for an unwavering trust (faith) is to guard against what James continued to reveal: “***For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind***” (Js 1:6). Those who doubt in the controlling power of the king will live as the restless waves of the sea. They will be tossed about by every trial that comes their way. Therefore, since “*the just will live by faith,*” then we must assume that being a trusting subject determines one’s relationship with the King (Rm 1:17). Trusting fully in King Jesus stabilizes each citizen of the kingdom. When the citizenship is stabilized by faith (trust), then the world can see that there

is something unique about the citizens.

It is only through faith in Jesus that we realize the outcome of our faith. And that outcome is *“life through His name”* (Jn 20:31). It is this trusting faith that will take subjects of the kingdom through the trials of life, and finally bring them into eternal glory when the King returns. It is as Annie Johnson Flint poetically wrote,

Have you come to the Red Sea place in your life,
Where, in spite of all you can do,
There is no way out,
There is no way back,
There is no way but through?

Then wait on the Lord with a trust serene,
Till the night of your fear is gone;
He will send the wind,
He will heap the floods,
When He says to your soul, “Go on!”

2. *The responsibility of obedience:*

There is no relationship with the King unless there is compliance to His will. Unfortunately, too many seek to establish their own rules of compliance as the foundation upon which they would maintain a relationship with the King. Anarchy, however, does not define a stable kingdom, neither does it define a stable relationship that one would seek to have with the King.

Jesus mentioned this point at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. He reminded the audience before whom He spoke, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 7:21). **This one statement assumes that there would be conditions for faithful subjects of the kingdom of Jesus.**

No kingdom that is divided against itself can continue. On another occasion, Jesus reminded would-be subjects, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. And every city or house divided against itself will not stand”* (Mt 12:25). Therefore, if one would be a faithful subject of the kingdom of Jesus, then he or she must voluntarily subject himself or herself to the will of the King of the kingdom. The faithful subject of the kingdom reign of Jesus is the one *“who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”* (Mt 7:21). If one does not do the will of the Father, then this subject of the universal kingdom reign of Jesus practices lawlessness (Mt 7:23). And we know that no lawless person will inherit the kingdom.

3. *The responsibility of loyalty:* At this time Jesus has authority over all things, *“angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”* (1 Pt 3:22). The Father has *“put all things in subjection under His feet”* (Hb 2:8). However, we do not *“yet see all things put under Him”* (Hb 2:8). The entire habitation of the world is under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all the inhabitants of the world are obedient subjects.

Every kingdom has rebellious subjects. The same is true of the universal kingdom of Jesus. But we must not forget that the presence of rebellious subjects does not negate the universal reign of Jesus.

If one would assume the responsibilities of being a submissive subject of the kingdom, then he must be loyal to King Jesus. Loyalty means faithfulness

to the will of the King even throughout times of persecution. Every loyal disciple, therefore, is charged to be faithful even if it means death (Rv 2:10). “Therefore,” the Holy Spirit would remind us, “endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tm 2:3). We must remember the words of a faithful subject who gave himself in loyal service to the King: “I endure all things for the elects’ sake, that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tm 2:10).

4. The responsibility of living the gospel of the King: When Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,” he continued to reveal the gospel journey of Jesus from being in the form of God to the sacrifice of the cross (Ph 2:5-8). Our King expects us to have such a mind in order that we too be able to make the same journey. This is the gospel journey to glory. This is the meaning behind what Paul wrote in Romans 12:1:

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is having the mind of Christ who did the same for us. It means that we must transform our minds from the things of this world to that which is above this world (Rm 12:2; Cl 3:1,2).

We live the sacrificial life of gratitude because He lived for us. We have

been spiritually made alive (Jn 3:3-5), because He physically died for us on the cross. Gospel living is a life of thanksgiving for the cross. For all those who would be responsible subjects of the kingdom of Jesus, must do as Jesus did for them. “If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Lk 9:23).

5. The responsibility of living the gospel for the honor of King Jesus: When we consider what Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, we understand that he was quite profound in what he said concerning our living the transformed life:

You are our letter written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tablets of the heart (2 Co 3:2,3).

To the disciples in Philippi, Paul exhorted, “Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Ph 1:27). This is the mind of Christ. This is the transformed life after the manner by which Jesus transformed Himself into the flesh of man in order to live the gospel of our redemption. We thus live the gospel by following in His steps. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps” (1 Pt 2:21).

Chapter 10

JESUS IS LORD!

We would think for a moment. If we were all assembled on Sunday morning in a meeting hall, and there entered the President of our country, what would we do? We would probably try to look without staring, and be surprised without uttering a sound. There might be some shuffling here and there. But then think, if someone in particular entered into our assembly whom we all know through the word of God. What if Jesus would appear before us all? What would we do? Without question, we would all fall on our faces to the floor. We would all respond as Thomas when he finally realized that Jesus was indeed who He said He was: “*My Lord and my God*” (Jn 20:28).

Henry Ward Beecher once said, “If Christ be not divine, every impulse of the Christian world falls to a lower octave, and light and love and hope decline.”

In the early Roman culture there were masters and slaves. In fact, some historians have estimated that about half of the population of the Roman Empire was composed of slaves. The citizenship of the Empire, therefore, was keenly sensitive to what a master/slave relationship entailed. Masters (lords) were in control. Slaves carried out in every detail the wishes of the masters.

The slave culture of the Empire established the definition of what a slave was, as well as his responsibilities toward his master. When Jesus used the word

“slave,” therefore, He was laying the foundation upon which His disciples would relate to Him as their Lord, for the Roman culture defined what He meant when He used the word “slave.”

Throughout the epistles, the Holy Spirit continued to use the master/slave relationship that existed between Jesus and His disciples. However, we must keep in mind that there was a difference between the master/slave relationship of the society of Rome and the master/slave relationship that existed between Jesus and His disciples. The difference would be defined by the words “voluntary” and “appreciation.” Discipleship to Jesus would be voluntary because of what Jesus did for His slaves in life, and what He would eventually do for them through the gift of eternal life.

After the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God the Father, the apostle Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and announced for the first time in history, “*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both **Lord** and **Christ***” (At 2:38). Jesus was made the Master/Lord because He was seated on the throne of God in heaven. Through the cross, He made a gospel call to all those who would volunteer to submit to His lordship. They would voluntarily submit because they knew the result of their submission. Thousands volunteered

to make Him their Lord because He gave them the gift of eternal life through the sacrificial offering of His incarnate blood.

The story was written in some book we have long forgotten, about a slave who was auctioned. Some benevolent person bought the slave, and then said, "You are now free. You may go and do what you will." The slave responded, "Since you have set me free, I will serve you the rest of my life." We are reminded of what Paul wrote to the Christians who lived in the heart of slavery of the Roman Empire:

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as bondservants [slaves] to obey, his bondservants you are whom you obey, whether of sin to death or of obedience to righteousness? (Rm 6:16).

In our obedience to the gospel of Jesus we have voluntarily submitted to His lordship. In view of this, Paul continued the preceding discussion:

*But God be thanked that though you were the bondservants of sin, yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching that was delivered to you. **And having been freed from sin, you became the bondservants of righteousness** (Rm 6:17,18).*

The Jewish audience to whom Peter addressed the gospel message in Acts 2 had previously known Jesus as only the rebellious carpenter from Galilee. It

surely came as a shock to many of them when Peter used the word "Lord" in reference to this humble carpenter from Galilee. But the evidence of the carpenter being more than a carpenter from Galilee had become convincing by the time Peter made the announcement. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the evidence of His sonship developed to the point that priests came to Him in the night, saying, "*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (Jn 3:2). And if God was with Jesus, then their relationship with Him had to change.

The validation that Jesus was who He said He was, was the absence of His body when the announcement was made in Jerusalem that He was raised from the dead. No antagonist of the apostles could produce the body in order to disprove the resurrection claim.

After affirming that God had raised up Jesus, Peter made the announcement that this same Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, for whom Israel had been waiting since the days of Abraham. All supernatural and prophetic evidence pointed to this conclusion. It was a time, therefore, to accept Jesus, not just as the man Jesus, but as the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was made Lord on the throne of God. He was declared Christ by His fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. So on the day of Pentecost, about 3,000 submitted to the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus to be baptized for the remission of their sins.

Those who obeyed the gospel

wanted the Lord Jesus to be the Master of their lives. Through the Spirit's written documents of the response of the early disciples, emphasis was placed on the continuing ministry of Jesus as the Lord of those who sought to live the gospel that He brought into the world. It would be good for us to remind ourselves of the many aspects that His lordship plays in our own lives. We are who we are because of who He presently is at the right hand of God.

Jesus is our Master, and we are His willing subjects who walk in gratitude of what He did for us at the cross. We are His slaves because of what He brought into the world. And because He is our Lord Jesus, He will take us out of the world when He comes again. We now live by who He is and what He is presently doing as King of kings and Lord of lords.

- **Authority of the Lord Jesus:**

"By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... speak the same thing ... that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together" (1 Co 1:10).

"In name of our Lord Jesus Christ ... deliver such a one to Satan" (1 Co 5:4,5).

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly" (2 Th 3:6).

"Now those who are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread" (2 Th 3:12).

"If anyone teaches otherwise, and consents not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ ... he is

proud, knowing nothing" (1 Tm 6:3,4).

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed ... ungodly men who ... deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ" (Jd 4).

- **Origins through the Lord Jesus:**

"There is ... one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him" (1 Co 8:6).

- **Father of the Lord Jesus:**

"I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ep 3:14; Cl 1:3).

"Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 1:3).

"With one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm 15:6).

- **Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus:**

"The Jews ... killed the Lord Jesus" (1 Th 2:,14,15).

- **Resurrection of the Lord Jesus:**

They *"did not find the body of the Lord Jesus"* (Lk 24:3).

"The apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (At 4:33).

"He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus" (2 Co 4:14).

- **Presence of the Lord Jesus:**

These men *"accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us"* (At 1:21).

"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (2 Tm 4:22).

- **Supper of the Lord Jesus:**

"The Lord Jesus on the night in which He

was betrayed took bread ..." (1 Co 11:23).

- **Preaching the Lord Jesus:**

Paul *"spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (At 9:29).

"Men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus" (At 11:20).

"All those who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (At 19:10).

"Fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified" (At 19:17).

Paul lived two years in Rome, *"preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ"* (At 28:30,31).

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1:16).

"Remember the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jd 17).

- **Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus:**

"They were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (At 8:16).

"They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" (At 19:5).

- **Church in the Lord Jesus:**

"To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1).

- **Persecution for the Lord Jesus:**

"Stephen ... called on the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'" (At 7:59).

Barnabas and Paul *"risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (At 15:26).

"For I [Paul] am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (At 21:13).

We are *"always carrying about in the body the death of our Lord Jesus, so that the life of the Lord Jesus might also be manifested in our body"* (2 Co 4:10).

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gl 6:17).

- **Victory through the Lord Jesus:**

God *"gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Co 15:57).

- **Prayer through the Lord Jesus:**

"Through the Lord Jesus Christ ... strive together with me in prayers to God" (Rm 15:30).

- **Believe on the Lord Jesus:**

"God gave them the like gift ... having believed on the Lord Jesus" (At 11:17).

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved" (At 16:31).

Teaching *"faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (At 20:21).

"Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus" and *"believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead"* (Rm 10:9).

"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed" (1 Co 16:22).

"I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus" (Ep 1:15).

"I thank God ... hearing of your love and faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus" (Pl 5).

- **Ministry in the Lord Jesus:**

Paul finished his ministry that he “received from the Lord Jesus” (At 20:24).

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (At 20:35).

“God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gl 6:14).

“I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy” (Ph 2:19).

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Cl 3:17).

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 1:3).

“Now may our God and our Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you” (1 Th 3:11).

“For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (1 Th 4:2).

“Now the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead ... equip you in every good work to do His will” (Hb 13:20,21).

“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Js 1:1).

“For if these things are in you and abound, they make you to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pt 1:8).

- **The gospel of the Lord Jesus:**

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Co 8:9).

“Taking vengeance on those who ... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Th 1:8).

“He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Th 2:14).

- **Giving thanks in the Lord Jesus:**

Give “thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ep 5:20).

- **Grace and peace from the Lord Jesus:**

“We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we will be saved” (At 15:11).

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rm 1:7; Ph 1:2; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:2; 2 Jn 3).

“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rm 5:1).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rm 16:20,24; Ph 4:23).

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Co 1:3).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (1 Co 16:23; Pl 25).

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Co 1:2; Ep 1:2).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Co 13:14).

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gl 1:3; Pl 3).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Gl 6:18; 1 Th 5:28; 2 Th 3:18).

“Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Ep 6:24).

“So that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him

- according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Th 1:12).*
“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father ... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work” (2 Th 2:16,17).
- **Salvation through the Lord Jesus:**
“For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 5:9).
 - **Reconciliation through the Lord Jesus:**
“We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Rm 5:11).
 - **Justification in the Lord Jesus:**
“You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Co 6:11).
 - **Live in the Lord Jesus:**
“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rm 13:14).
“I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself” (Rm 14:14).
“My brethren, do not show favoritism and hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (Js 2:1).
 - **Blessed in the Lord Jesus:**
“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ep 1:3).
 - **Final coming of the Lord Jesus:**
Wait “for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Co 1:7).
“Be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Co 1:8).
“We are your boast as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus” (2 Co 1:14).
“We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ph 3:20).
“For what is our hope Is it not you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 Th 2:19).
“May He strengthen your hearts ... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Th 3:13).
“May your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 5:23).
“Rest with us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven” (2 Th 1:7).
“Now we urge you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, that you not be quickly shaken ...” (2 Th 2:1,2).
“You keep this commandment without spot or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tm 6:14).
“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jd 21).
“He who testifies these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:20).
 - **Judgment by the Lord Jesus:**
“I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead” (2 Tm 4:1).