

# The Life of Christ

## Book VI - His Entrance Into Jerusalem

by George Ford

### Table of contents

1 Christ Seeks the Lost.....	4
1.1 The Parable of the Lost Sheep.....	4
1.2 The Parable of the Lost Coin.....	5
1.3 The Parable of the Prodigal Son.....	6
1.4 The Elder Son.....	9
2 Christ Relates Two Parables.....	11
2.1 The Shrewd Manager.....	11
2.2 The Rich Man and Lazarus.....	12
3 Christ Raises A Man From Death.....	13
4 Encounters And Discourses Of Christ.....	18
4.1 Healing Ten Lepers.....	18
4.2 A Question Regarding the Kingdom.....	19
4.3 The Importance of Humble Prayer.....	20
4.4 A Question Regarding Divorce.....	20
4.5 Blessing the Children.....	21
4.6 The Rich Young Ruler.....	22
4.7 The Parable of the Farm Workers.....	23
4.8 A New Announcement Regarding the Cross.....	24
4.9 Christ Saves Zacchaeus.....	25
4.10 Christ Visits the Home of Lazarus.....	26
5 Christ The King Enters Jerusalem.....	27

5.1 Christ Weeps Over Jerusalem.....	29
5.2 Christ Curses a Barren Fig Tree.....	30
6 Christ Cleanses The Temple.....	31
6.1 Jesus Drives out the Moneychangers.....	31
6.2 A Lesson In Faith.....	32
6.3 The Authority of Jesus is Questioned.....	32
6.4 The Parable of the Two Sons.....	33
6.5 The Parable of the Wicked Tenants.....	34
6.6 The Parable of the Wedding Banquet.....	35
7 Christ Answers The Jewish Elders.....	35
7.1 Render to Caesar What is His.....	36
7.2 A God of the Living, Not the Dead.....	37
7.3 The Greatest Commandment.....	38
7.4 The Descendant of David is Lord.....	38
7.5 Christ Praises the Offering of a Widow.....	39
7.6 Some Greeks Ask to See Jesus.....	39
8 Christ Prophesies About Future Events.....	41
8.1 Signs of the Destruction of Jerusalem.....	41
8.1.1 A. Preliminary Signs.....	41
8.1.2 B. Immediate Signs.....	42
8.2 The Second Coming of Christ.....	44
8.3 The Time of the Destruction of Jerusalem.....	44
8.4 Keeping Watch.....	45
8.5 The Parable of the Ten Virgins.....	46
8.6 The Parable of the Talents.....	46
8.7 The Great Day of Judgement.....	47
8.8 The Elders of the Jews Conspire.....	49
9 Christ Institutes Holy Communion.....	50
9.1 Christ Washes the Feet of His Disciples.....	50

9.2 Christ Eats the Passover.....	53
9.3 The Necessity of Holy Communion.....	55
9.4 Encouragement for Peter.....	56
10 Christ In The Upper Room.....	57
10.1 The Parable of the Vine.....	58
11 Quiz.....	59

All quotations are from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION(r). NIV(r). Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

## 1. Christ Seeks the Lost

The Pharisees and scribes accused Christ of associating with sinners and eating with them. Therefore, he presented three parables showing that the evil of sinners does not prevent God from showering his fatherly love on them, for when they fall miserably into the trap of the Devil, his fatherly love increases, and he still desires to save them. We see the same response in a parent who has a child that has gone astray. The return of those who have fallen away is very dear to God and to all righteous people.

### 1.1. The Parable of the Lost Sheep

**"Now the tax collectors and 'sinners' were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' Then Jesus told them this parable: 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.'" (Luke 15:1-7)**

Jesus presented this first parable in the form of a question. He asked, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" It is as if he were rebuking them, the nation's "shepherds", for neglecting the lost, being content with the ninety-nine who were safe.

Christ portrayed himself as a faithful, loving shepherd who compassionately seeks out a lost soul because of its frailty, distinguishing it from the others which did not stray. He longs to heal it and bear it home on his shoulders, rejoicing. He even calls angels and saints in heaven to join him in his celebration. They all find greater joy over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

Who would dare to describe the occasions for rejoicing in heaven? None other than Christ who, since eternity, has been in the bosom of the Father and came down to earth! Who are those whom he described as the ninety-nine righteous who need no repentance? They cannot be angels or people, for the Apostle Paul said:

**"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."**

**(Romans 3:10-12)**

If the ninety-nine righteous ones are not angels or people, then they must be those who wrongly imagine themselves to be righteous. This is what Christ's listeners among the Pharisees did and also what the self-righteous in every age do. But, even if the ninety-nine were righteous and had not strayed, being valued a hundredfold over the tax collectors, sinners, and the lost, the Heavenly Shepherd is not content just with them, while ignoring the despised and rejected others. When he sees one sinner repent, he is more pleased with him than with all the religious people who perform their prayers, fastings, and offerings. He came from heaven for the very purpose of saving sinners. He does not wait for a sinner to come to him first but he goes out after him, finds him, and pleads with him to return to God and to the home of his true Father. Had the Pharisees been like the dwellers in heaven, they would have also rejoiced with the same praises. A sinner, knowing that his repentance causes the bells of heaven to ring joyfully, will have a powerful and noble incentive to hasten his salvation.

## **1.2. The Parable of the Lost Coin**

**""Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin." In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."" (Luke 15:8-10)**

In this passage, Christ presents a domestic situation for the women in his audience, setting the proportion between the lost and the others as one in ten. He thus emphasises the value of a sinner. He also makes clear the loss to the Heavenly King who owns the earth and everything in it with all its inhabitants (Psalm 24:1). In the parable, a woman lost one coin out of ten, and, after a thorough search, found it and rejoiced like the owner of the sheep, letting others share in her joy.

One could say that the woman stands for the Church just as the shepherd represents Christ, its head. The true Church of Christ follows his plan because he leads it by his Spirit which earnestly seeks out the lost in the wilderness of sin. The illuminated lamp in the hand of the woman could very well represent the revealed Book which David described as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path (Psalm 119:105). The Church is right in saying "my lost coin" in reference to the lost because their blood will be required from its many undedicated members.

In these two parables, Christ taught that the plea for salvation by a sinner is the result of the work of God in his heart. This mirrors the greatest fundamental truth of Christianity: True religion is not what man does for God, but what God does for man.

### 1.3. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

"Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men." So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.'" (Luke 15:11-24)

This third story is one of the most precious of all the parables of Christ. In it, the behaviour of children in a family is represented, and Christ may have told it to convey a message of caution to all the children in his audience. This parable differs from the two earlier ones in the value it attaches to the lost: The proportion is now one to one. It also emphasises the responsibility on the part of man to exercise his free will by repenting and returning to God. This response is a result of God's seeking the lost and opening a door for their salvation. Christ grouped these parables together in order to fully clarify for us what salvation means.

In this third parable, Christ divided the specially favoured Jewish nation into two types of people, represented by the two sons of the one father. The elder, legally entitled to a double portion of the inheritance, depicts those who keep the externals of religion and are -- in their own eyes and in the eyes of others -- people of religion who are faithful to God. These folk carefully keep the precepts of religion and do not openly stray in the wilderness of sin and transgression. The younger brother represents the great majority of the nation who indulge their passions and are not bound by religious principles. They deny the mercy of God and misuse his gifts in rebellion against him. They abuse their noble freedom by drifting away from God openly and deliberately. Therefore, they neglect the Book of God, his worship, and his people. In so doing, they are estranged from holiness, safety, and happiness, which in turn means departure from their best interests and that of those around them.

The younger son left the house of his father and his only brother. He strayed from parental care, the blessings of his homeland, and sound fellowship. He stopped working to increase his inheritance, resented parental authority and restraint, and longed to be his own master. He wanted to get away from home in order to live as he pleased, indulging in corrupt pleasures

along with the wicked. By demanding all of his inheritance at once, he abandoned the spirit of sonship which prays, "Father... Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 11:2,3). But this foolish son did not depart from home immediately; so too a sinner leaves God gradually.

This son left his father while he was still alive. This is the state of a sinner who lives for himself, boasting about his independence, and being proud of what grieves God. Not wanting to force obedience, the father consented to the wishes of his son and gave him his portion of the estate. Thus, in God's dealings with the wicked, he often gives abundant earthly blessings according to their desires; but these gifts are not a sign of fatherly pleasure.

In the far country where this young man went, he was free from the restricting influences of home and the memories of his noble past. Here, he gave full rein to his evil passions, and also spent all his wealth, becoming penniless. His poverty coincided with a famine in that land, and the hearts of his friends were so hardened towards him that they did not help him. He ended up being deprived of the bare necessities of life.

We can imagine him trying to keep up appearances, but when he started to suffer hunger, he went to work at a farm, feeding swine. Thus, he sacrificed his religious rules on cleanliness, in order to survive. He endured uncleanness so that he could fill his stomach with the husks and pods the pigs were eating. All the while, none of his so-called friends would give him anything.

Quite often, God uses hardships to bring people back to himself. However, these difficulties can also drive them away from him. What God intends to be a blessing for salvation can be turned, by man, into a curse for destruction. But this lost son found salvation in the depths of his calamity. Likewise, we sometimes can enter the door of salvation only by crossing over the threshold of despair.

The one who returns to the home of his father, due to hardship, proves his true sonship because a lost son is still a son, and his father is still his father. Just as obedience did not make him a son, so too his disobedience did not sever the God-given relationship which can only be removed by death. Evidently, there is in the heart of every human sinner the faint remembrance of a lost divine sonship. Therefore, no matter how deep one sinks into wickedness, or how long one's list of sin is, this blessed spark of sonship cannot be entirely extinguished, unless it is killed deliberately through blaspheming the Holy Spirit; that is, by refusing to repent, hardening the heart, and insisting on choosing to live in darkness. God alone can invigorate this spark, so that a sinner will seek refuge in the only Saviour, obtaining salvation.

The young man returned to his senses as a result of dire poverty. When he resolved to go back, he was repentant and humble, confident of the mercy of his father. His repentance was evidenced in the speech which he prepared to give when he met his father: "Father I have

sinned against heaven and against you." This young man realised that his transgression was not only against his father but, more importantly, against God. No offence can be described as merely a sin against man. It is first and foremost an affront to God.

The genuineness of this young man's humility was demonstrated because he did not expect to have his original rights returned. He asked to be regarded as a servant, and any acceptance he was to receive from his father would be considered a favour. Even though he deserved expulsion, the reality of his faith was exhibited in that he got up and went home without fearing the rejection of his father. This sort of faith is a necessary requirement for repentance, and repentance without faith is empty; it does not lead to salvation. The son in the parable not only thought about returning, but actually did return. Even the best of intentions is useless unless accompanied with action!

As the wayward son got nearer to the house of his father, he could see his father from afar, running out to meet him. The father's eyes had carefully and faithfully scanned the road on which his son had departed, in hope that he would one day return. Now that day had finally arrived! It was a great pleasure for the father to see his beloved son, and, not wanting to rebuke or humiliate him, he had compassion upon him.

The Creator is patient in all things, except when receiving a repentant sinner. We see an example of the divine haste of God in this parable, because Christ said that the father ran out to meet his son and kissed him. He met him with love and forgiveness, overlooked his shameful past, and embraced him warmly, despite his filthy condition. He compensated him for his past losses and misery by treating him better than the other son who had not gone astray. Moreover, the father did not wait for the son to prove the genuineness of his repentance by his actions, but was reconciled to him immediately. After being forgiven, the consistent submission of the son to his father, for the sole purpose of being obedient, would be a better proof of his repentance than a submission generated merely for the sake of obtaining his father's blessing. The unconditional forgiveness granted to a sinner before total obedience is a divine grace and generosity, superior to being granted as a reward for obedience.

Salvation is not just the result of divine pity. Rather, it depends upon the love of the Father for his child which is lost in the desert of spiritual desolation and bound by the chains of Satan. This son, no matter how far he had strayed and become unlike his father, was still his son and bore his name, though unworthily. He was still the heir of the family, despite having wasted his fortune.

How beautiful was this loving reunion where the joy of the father exceeded that of his repentant son. The resolve of the son to repent was strengthened when he saw his father's strong affection and free forgiveness. In the same way, a repentant sinner is favourably affected by God's free, immediate, and complete forgiveness; his genuine sorrow for sin



grows and is strengthened because of it. It is impossible for him to presume that the grace of God would delay changing him because it now serves as a new bond, causing him to avoid everything that would displease God.

When the prodigal son met his father, he began the speech which he had prepared while caring for the pigs. His father, however, stopped him before he could say that he was willing to be considered a servant. Contrary to the son's expectations, the father told his servants to treat him as a beloved younger son whose familial rights were being restored twofold. Instead of the filthy clothes he was wearing, he received the best robe, like the "robe of righteousness" and the "garments of salvation" which Isaiah the Prophet wrote about (Isaiah 61:10). He appeared before God justified, cleansed, and purified, to the glory of the Saviour. The father then ordered a ring to be put on his finger -- a sign of filial authority -- enabling him to be a deputy on behalf of his father. This is a reflection of the spiritual authority which the Holy Spirit bestows by dwelling in a repentant person. The father also ordered sandals for him to enable him to perform his family duties seriously. This is a picture of the spiritual protection every truly penitent person receives. The father completed his welcome by holding a feast, making up for the hunger and deprivation his son had endured while away from home.

The Father explained his actions to his servants by saying, "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again." The father regarded his son's straying into wickedness as moral and spiritual death. Also, his absence from home was a symbol of physical death. Thus, his return was like someone rising from the dead because sin, not physical death, is the real death.

#### 1.4. The Elder Son

**""Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. "Your brother has come", he replied, "and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound." The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" "My son", the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."" " (Luke 15:25-32)**

Celebrations in this world are sometimes mixed with sadness -- often caused by relatives. Thus, while feasting was going on in the house, the elder son became bitter. After returning from the field, he was surprised to hear merrymaking for no apparent reason. It is here that his true evil character surfaced. Instead of going in to share in the celebration, he called out a servant, and, with a resentful spirit full of ill-will, asked what the occasion was. On hearing

the explanation, he was filled with anger and envy, refusing to go in to share in the joy of his father and brother.

Jesus portrayed tax collectors and sinners in the example of this wayward son. God opened the door of salvation for them, and they entered. In the elder brother, he depicted the supposedly religious people who complain instead of rejoice over the return of the lost. The elder brother could only see the faults in his younger brother. He would not even call him by his name, but, while speaking with his father, preferred to refer to him as "this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes."

Although this statement from the elder brother had some truth in it, it did not present the truth in its entirety. He ignored the fact that his younger brother had truly repented. In his pride, he could only see his own virtues, for he addressed his father, saying, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders." He again assumed that he was telling the truth; yet, it was not the whole truth. His ideas concerning his service to his father were exposed by his words: "Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends." Instead of sharing in the joy of his father, he became selfish, and this attitude took control of his spirit and actions. As a result, a gulf was formed between him and his father, which was greater than that which the younger son had created by going away and committing wickedness in a distant land. The father, however, did not treat his eldest son as he deserved. He went out and pleaded with him, in spite of his rudeness and bitter criticism. Lovingly, he said, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours." We learn from this that God does not withhold his divine love and mercy even from the proud and hardened. He offers them the same -- and sometimes even greater -- repentance and faith as he does with other sinners. All they have to do is trust him and leave their evil ways, as the tax collectors and sinners did in Jesus' day.

This story ends without any mention of the elder son being sorry. But we know that the elders and Pharisees, whom he represented, did not repent but continued in their error, finally delivering Christ to Pilate for crucifixion. Their lack of repentance was further evidenced at the trial of Christ and their cruel treatment of him.

From the account of the elder brother, we learn that the proud who depend on their goodness for justification before God are further from him and heaven than sinners who make no claim of virtue. There is more hope in reforming the wicked because the hypocrisy and pride of the self-righteous are great hindrances to salvation. It was these very sins which kept the Pharisees from faith and salvation in Christ. Many today are kept back for the same reason.

From the example of the prodigal son, we learn that God regards it as his own loss when a sinner insists on remaining estranged from him. But the return of a sinner from the "far country" is a gain and source of joy for God. How wonderful is his divine love and patience! How great should our motivation be to cease from sin!

## 2. Christ Relates Two Parables

### 2.1. The Shrewd Manager

**"Jesus told his disciples: 'There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg-- I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil', he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat', he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.'" (Luke 16:1-13)**

Christ related a story of a wealthy man who, before firing his manager for wasteful practices, asked him to hand over the accounts. Included there were contracts, signed by his farmers and endorsed by him, showing what each owed in crops. This dishonest manager, instead of confessing his guilt and trying to change, started figuring out a scheme whereby he would benefit after his discharge. Satanic power which creates transgressions has a way of producing out of them even more. Thus, the manager devised a fresh trick, worse than his original dishonesty, for he made the farmers under him part of this fraud. In the Bible, we read that those who lead others to do wrong have a greater condemnation (Luke 17:1).

By arranging illicit transactions, the dishonest manager sought to buy friends for himself to help him out in the future. He asked them to write contracts showing lesser amounts than what they owed. He planned to approve and present them to the landowner. He made the following excuse: "I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg." But what he really should have said is: "I ought not to embezzle!"

When the landowner discovered this new treachery, he was amazed at the craftiness and boldness of the manager. He commended him for acting shrewdly. He did not praise him for his dishonesty. If he had done this, he would not have referred to him as "shrewd", nor would he have withheld his job from him.

Christ concluded this parable by stating that people of the world are wiser than the children of light. He advised his listeners to use whatever worldly wealth they possessed in the service of others -- especially toward their eternal spiritual welfare. Jesus did not give us excuses for amassing wealth by dishonest means nor for cheating and then spending all or part of it in good causes. However, we are advised that the best way to get rid of dishonest wealth quickly is to use it for noble purposes and in ways that will facilitate the way to heaven for its recipients.

The manager in the story used ill-gotten riches in order to gain friends for himself when he would be in need. How much more should someone, trying to dispose of wrongly-acquired wealth, seek to use it for making friends who will welcome him into everlasting mansions! If the shrewd manager was careful to guarantee his earthly future by wrong means, how much more should the wise take care to ensure their heavenly future! The one who shows faithfulness in earthly matters which are considered worthless can be one chosen by God to inherit far more precious treasures; namely, heavenly ones.

## 2.2. The Rich Man and Lazarus

**""There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire." But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham", he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."" " (Luke 16:19-31)**

Christ told a parable of a rich man who lived luxuriously while a wretched beggar lay at his gate, eating the leftovers which were given to him. Both men eventually died, but the destiny of each was different. The rich man had a splendid funeral, but was denied a heavenly inheritance. The burial of the beggar was unceremonious, but he was tenderly ushered into "Abraham's bosom".

In hell, the rich man found himself unfit for heaven. He looked up and saw the bliss of Lazarus, and hoped he could somehow lessen his own suffering. Not daring to seek relief from God whom he had ignored during his life, he sought the help of Abraham, the patriarch

and father of the Jews. Though in life he had despised Lazarus, he now desired some water from him to cool his tongue. This wealthy man now craved a drop of water from the finger of the beggar who had once pleaded for leftovers from his own table!

Abraham told him that what he asked for was not possible because he had not been sensitive to God or to spiritual matters in his former life. Now he had to recognise the enormity of the mistake he had made while on earth. By contrast, those who fulfil the conditions for eternal life while on earth do not mind scorn and suffering in the world, for one hour spent with Abraham compensates for all that. Furthermore, such a great gulf exists between heaven and hell that passage from one place to the other is impossible.

When the rich man realised that his own condemnation could not be lessened, he thought of his five brothers who were still alive. He wanted somehow to warn them not to follow him to hell. He wondered if it would be possible for Lazarus to return to tell them of his misery, torment, and the need to escape his destiny. Abraham said that his brothers did not need more intellectual persuasion because those who are not satisfied with the evidence for faith found in the Bible will not believe no matter what wonderful proofs they are given. Unbelief is spiritual blindness which new evidence cannot cure. To a blind man, degrees of brightness make no difference; no matter how bright the sun shines, he will not be able to see its light.

This foolish man imagined that his brothers, who knew of the misery of Lazarus on earth, would pay attention and repent when they saw him coming down gloriously from heaven to deliver the warning. But Abraham's reply refuted this assumption. In this story, we see how the eternal destiny of man is unalterably linked to his earthly experience. Also, the door of heaven does not remain open to the unrepentant after their death. Seeking mediation from the saints in heaven is utterly futile.

### **3. Christ Raises A Man From Death**

**"Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is sick.' When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.' Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days." (John 11:1-6)**

(Note: This Lazarus is different from the one in the previous parable.)

A messenger came to Christ from Bethany to tell him that the brother of Mary and Martha, whom Jesus loved, was sick. The request was not based on the love of Lazarus for Christ but on the love of Christ for Lazarus. The basis of joy, hope, and salvation lies not in the love of a sinner for the Saviour, but in the love of the saviour for the sinner.

Mary and Martha were aware of the danger Christ would be in, if he returned to Jerusalem after leaving it; so they did not ask him to come to them. Maybe they remembered that on one occasion he healed at a distance. It would be enough for him to know of their brother's illness, for him to order his recovery from afar.

The reply of Christ to the message was brief, and he did not offer excuses for not accompanying the messenger. He said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." The messenger returned to Bethany only to discover that Lazarus had died. What must he have thought? Did he assume that Jesus was a liar because he had said that the sickness of Lazarus would not end in death? What did Mary and Martha think about his delaying to help them? Did they doubt his love for them?

**"Then he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judea.' 'But Rabbi', they said, 'a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.' After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.' His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.' Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'" (John 11:7-16)**

Three days after receiving the news of the death of Lazarus, Christ asked his disciples to prepare to go to Judea, but the disciples objected, saying, "Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" They were puzzled at this development. If this trip were necessary for healing Lazarus, why did he not go earlier? And if it were unnecessary, why was he now endangering himself and them?

Jesus used the objection of the disciples to teach them that one who is guided by the Lord need have no fear because divine guidance is light, whereas its absence is darkness. He added that his purpose in going was to wake Lazarus from his sleep. From his use of the term "our friend", we gather that this was a young man of excellent qualities, a special friend of Christ and his disciples.

When Jesus noticed that they had not understood his use of the word "sleep", he told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, even though death for the believer is like sleep, and the resurrection like waking to eternal happiness.

Jesus showed his disciples that his delay in arriving at Bethany was to their advantage. By withholding the blessing of healing, he could now bestow a much greater one: life from the dead. This would strengthen the faith of the disciples. God often deals in this way with those who fear him. It appears the disciples hesitated somewhat, but Thomas finally spoke out

enthusiastically: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." By these words, he showed his great love for Christ and willingness to die for him. Jesus and his disciples then proceeded to Bethany.

**"On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 'Lord', Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord', she told him, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.' "** (John 11:17-27)

As Jesus and his disciples approached the village, Martha heard that they were coming. She hurried out to meet them, leaving her sister, Mary, to be with the mourners in the house. Because of the presence of many mourners, we can infer that the household of Lazarus was wealthy.

As soon as Martha reached Christ, she told him that if he had been there, her brother would not have died. She added that even if this were the case, God would grant whatever he asked. Her faith in Christ was obviously strong, though not perfect, for when he told her, "Your brother will rise again", she understood it to mean that he would rise with all the other believers on the Day of Resurrection. Nevertheless, Christ honoured her faith as he always does. Next, he made a momentous declaration: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

Who else but God can claim that having faith in him will lead to everlasting life after death? Who can describe or comprehend the amount of comfort which believers down the ages have derived from these words! This same comfort is the hope of believers until he comes again, which many believe will be soon. At that time, he will raise all the dead by the word of his command. When he asked Martha if she believed this, she replied in the affirmative. We see the blossoming of her faith, reflected in her first reply, mature quickly in her second response.

**"And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here', she said, 'and is asking for you.' When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said,**



**'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' " (John 11:28-37)**

After Jesus asked to see Mary, he stayed where he was while Martha rushed home to bring her sister. When Mary got up suddenly, the others followed her, thinking they should be near her if she went to weep at the tomb. It would be here that the enemies of Christ would unwittingly witness the greatest of his miracles. After seeing it, there would be no ground for doubting or denying his wonderful deeds; that is, not unless they deliberately shut their eyes to the truth.

One can visualise this sombre procession to the cemetery, being led by the two grieving sisters. One can also imagine the bewilderment of the Jewish leaders when they saw Christ, the one whom they hated and wanted to kill. They saw Mary kneel at his feet, repeating the words of Martha about how he should have been there earlier. This wish had most likely gone through the minds of both sisters quite often during the previous four days. They did not imply that Christ was to blame for not coming earlier, for their brother died on the same day that the messenger left. They did not say, "if you had come", but "if you had been here." Mary spoke and then the others burst out with cries and laments.

Tender feelings were stirred in the heart of Christ; he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. The original meaning of the Greek word for *troubled* is "vexed". Christ was angered to be faced at that moment with his adversary, Satan, the cause of all the misery, weeping, and death in the world. He asked where Lazarus was buried, and they led him to the place. He moved quietly as he walked, which led the Jews to remark how much he loved him.

Jesus wept, even though he was on his way to raise Lazarus from the dead and restore him to his family. He could not rejoice while his beloved friends were mourning. Thus, he gave the world the best example of true, heartfelt consolation; he wept with those who wept and rejoiced with those who rejoiced. He grieved because he sympathised with people in all their calamities. The elders present wondered why, on this occasion, he did not use his power to heal someone whom he loved so much. Only recently, he had healed a stranger in Jerusalem who had been born blind. Why did he not heal his beloved friend, Lazarus, and prevent him from dying?

**"Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 'Take away the stone', he said. 'But, Lord', said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.' Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.' "**  
**(John 11:38-44)**



When they reached the tomb, Jesus was again deeply moved at coming closer to his spiritual adversary, and fierce spiritual warfare was also taking place, Jesus was meeting Satan at his greatest stronghold: the grave!

At the entrance of the tomb, there was a large stone which had to be moved, and since the onlookers could do so, Christ did not resort to a miracle. Here we have a picture of salvation. A sinner, while expecting miraculous, divine intervention, must also not refuse to do what he is able to perform. As Christ expected the bystanders to move the stone, he also expects a sinner to repent and believe, before he will save him from his sins.

Martha, the spokeswoman for the family, objected to the stone being removed because she wanted to respect the burial of her brother. She also had doubts about the ability of Jesus to heal him at this stage. She did not wish to be faced with the corpse of her brother after it had started to decay, with the accompanying foul odour. Christ met her objection with a mild censure: "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

When they opened the tomb, the first task of Christ was to transfer the thoughts of the onlookers from the grave to him who sits on the throne of the universe -- his Father, with whom he was so closely united that he could say, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). He wanted to let everyone present know that he would not do anything apart from the will of his Father. He raised his eyes upward and said: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me." Then, lest any should think that he prayed like one of the prophets who sometimes got what he asked for and at other times did not, he added, "I knew that you always hear me." In order not to give the impression that his prayer was due to a deficiency in himself, he said, "I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." An important lesson here is that those who address the "dead" in trespasses and sins should talk to God about them in prayer first, as Christ did on this occasion.

At the end of his prayer, he said with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" His speaking loudly impressed the magnitude and difficulty of the task upon those present. It reminded them that the soul was not inside the tomb, but was being called from afar, beyond the grave. At the sound of his authoritative call, the previously-dead Lazarus emerged from the tomb, still wearing the linen wrappings which restricted his free movement. Christ ordered them to untie him and let him go. Thus, the prophecy which he had spoken earlier was fulfilled: "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

**"Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not**

**realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.' He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one." (John 11:45-52)**

This miracle proved the authenticity of Christ's heavenly mission and the truth of his teachings. It was also a confirmation for those who were already inclined to believe the truth. Even so, most of those present did not believe in him, but became more hardened. They intended to undermine Christ's statement that he was the Resurrection and the Life, by sentencing him to death. Accordingly, the Jewish elders held a special council to examine the new circumstances which had arisen due to the awesome raising of Lazarus from the grave. They acknowledged that Jesus was doing many miracles, and if they left him alone, all would believe in him by virtue of his personality, teaching, and miracles. A political riot would follow against Roman rule, which would anger the governors and cause them to destroy the nation or exile its people. This council proved of great benefit to the Christian cause, for it elicited a clear testimony about Christ from his foes.

During this session, Caiaphas, the High Priest, made a prophetic statement, although he was unaware of it. He said, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." Although Caiaphas said that it is better to lose one man than the whole nation, the Holy Spirit, who spoke through him, revealed that the death of Christ was redemptive for the nation -- not only for it, but also for the scattered children of God.

Caiaphas and most other high priests were of the sect of the Sadducees who denied the resurrection of the dead and the world of spirits. Therefore, the resurrection of Lazarus was a painful blow to their doctrine because it exposed its error. This fact made them join forces with their rivals, the Pharisees, to plot the death of Christ. But the resurrection of Lazarus prepared the people to believe in the resurrection of Christ that was to follow. Christ's own resurrection would ensue two months later, but he would not remain in the tomb as long as Lazarus did.

The Council of the Sanhedrin would not wait for another session, but immediately issued the decision to kill Jesus -- something they had often attempted before, but without success. However, from now on they would be determined to carry out their decision which bore an irreversible endorsement.

## **4. Encounters And Discourses Of Christ**

### **4.1. Healing Ten Lepers**

**"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he**

was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!' When he saw them, he said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.' " (Luke 17:11-19)

Christ returned to Jerusalem because the Feast of Passover, which marked the occasion of the redemptive sacrifice, was getting close. Apparently, the predicament of the lepers brought them together, even though they, as a mixture of Jews and one Samaritan, were natural enemies. In conformity to the social regulations of cleanliness, these ten stood far away when they called out.

At the outset of his ministry, Jesus used to touch the lepers whom he healed, showing his tenderness and mercy overriding external rituals of purity. However, now that he had become well-known for that, there was no longer any need for this kind of touching. He ordered those ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priests in Jerusalem as proof of being healed. They obeyed immediately before sensing anything of their healing. For that reason, Christ honoured their faith which had borne the fruit of obedience, and as they went along, they were cured. But the nine Jews did not bother to recognise the one who had shown them this mercy. They continued on their way to Jerusalem, forgetting their duty to thank the Healing Physician. The foreign Samaritan, however, was moved with gratitude. He returned and thanked Christ for delivering him from shame, danger, and exclusion. As a reward, he earned these precious words from Jesus: "Your faith has made you well." Does this incident not illustrate most of human experience? Are not those who thank God for his many mercies usually only very few in number?

#### 4.2. A Question Regarding the Kingdom

"Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is, or "There it is", because the kingdom of God is within you.' Then he said to his disciples, 'The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, "There he is!" or "Here he is!" Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.'" (Luke 17:20-27)

The Pharisees asked Christ when the kingdom of God would come. In reply, he stated a fundamental fact pertaining to his kingdom; namely, that it is not something which can be

said of a particular place or time. It is not a body, denomination or special church. Rather, the kingdom of God is within; that is, his kingdom consists of the hearts in which he lives and rules.

Jesus then directed his words to his disciples who dreamed of an earthly Jewish kingdom. Again, he referred to the suffering and rejection that lay before him. He also spoke of the wrath that would come upon the nation. That event would be similar to the terrors of the Great Flood and the horror of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. It would turn the Jewish nation into a rotting corpse upon which the Roman eagles would swoop down and devour!

### 4.3. The Importance of Humble Prayer

**"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (Luke 18:9-14)**

Christ directed his words to the Pharisees, to show them what they were like. He gave an example of a self-righteous Pharisee whose prayer in the Temple focused on his superior virtues. The prayer of a tax collector was different in that it was offered in a spirit of brokenness and contrition. He prayed, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." The Bible itself says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17). The tax collector went home justified, but not the Pharisee, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11).

### 4.4. A Question Regarding Divorce

**"Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?' 'Haven't you read', he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female", and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.' 'Why then', they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.' Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should**

**accept it." (Matthew 19:3-12)**

The Pharisees directed a hostile question at Christ on the subject of divorce. Although they had the Law of Moses, they pretended to honour Christ by appealing to him to decide on this matter -- to confirm or annul it. He rendered his verdict according to the Law. When they said that the Law allowed divorce on condition that it be officially and legally documented, he responded that this was a concession from Moses due to their hard hearts. God had at first given a law, limited to what they could endure, in order to rescue them from the corruption of their neighbours, and to lead them back gradually to the original, divine order which prescribed one woman for one man. However, the law of the New Kingdom does not permit divorce except for adultery. When a divorce is given on this basis, it is not permitted for the divorcees to remarry thereafter.

When the disciples heard about this conservative interpretation of the Law, compared with what they had been used to, they reacted by saying that marriage would then become difficult. Christ explained to them that remaining single is perfectly acceptable when one's motive is for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

#### **4.5. Blessing the Children**

**"Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there." (Matthew 19:13-15)**

Following his discussion about marital relationships, Christ made some beautiful remarks regarding children. Contempt of children was very common at that time, and since Christ is the Saviour of all, it was inevitable that he would be concerned about them.

Some people asked him to bless their children in the hope that something of his perfect purity and power would rub off on them. The disciples considered this an annoyance, and told them to leave because Jesus had more important things to do.

Jesus did not accept this rough treatment which revealed the big difference of thinking between himself and his disciples and contemporaries. In both his anger and happiness, he revealed pearls of divine wisdom. He reproved the disciples with strong yet loving words, saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them." He also made it clear that no one will enter the kingdom of heaven unless he turns and becomes like a child.

We believe that the salvation of Christ encompasses all children who die in infancy, regardless of the religious and social situation of their families. Imagine then how many infants there are who have joined the heavenly multitude, compared with the huge number of

adults who die in their sins!

#### 4.6. The Rich Young Ruler

"Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?' 'Why do you ask me about what is good?' Jesus replied. 'There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.' 'Which ones?' the man inquired. Jesus replied, 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother', and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" 'All these I have kept', the young man said. 'What do I still lack?' Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 19:16-23)

A wealthy Jewish leader approached Christ respectfully, wanting to learn about the way of salvation. He asked what particular good he could do to attain it. Christ replied that people, even the best of them, lack perfect goodness and that one can only ascribe real goodness to God. Either Christ was perfectly good, in which case he would be God Incarnate, or this rich man was mistaken. Christ always explained that his perfection and goodness were due to his being God in the flesh. No human being can claim perfection or goodness.

This rich young man wanted to know what good he could do to inherit eternal life. Christ advised him that the kind of goodness which would earn everlasting life is only that which is perfect. The Apostle James wrote: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). When this ruler alleged that he had kept the whole Law since his youth, Christ looked at him and loved him for his sincerity and diligence. He wished to reveal to this man that the acceptable keeping of the Law, by God's standard, is spiritual, not only literal. So, he told him that he should dispose of his wealth, distribute it to the poor, bear his cross, and follow him.

Jesus summarised the Law in two ways: loving God above all else and loving one's neighbour as oneself. Had this young man truly kept all the commandments, he would not have found it hard to obey the words of Christ. Thus, his claim proved to be false. We are told that he was sad because he was very rich. He showed that he loved his wealth more than God. It was his lord and master. Christ loved this man, and he deeply regretted his decision to put his wealth before the kingdom of heaven.

Entry into the kingdom of God starts in this life. Those who enter realise that all their belongings are dedicated to the King. Whenever God asks a believer for some of them, they should be offered willingly and gladly. This eliminates all complaining when poverty or material loss strikes. When someone's heart is attached to the things of this world, he will not find anything to enjoy in heaven; he has no treasure there. Admittance into heaven for such a person is preposterous. Even if it were possible, he would not enjoy it.



**"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" (Matthew 19:23-26)**

In connection with this, Christ told his disciples how difficult it would be for those who rely on riches to enter the kingdom of God; it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The disciples objected, saying, "Who then can be saved?" Christ explained to them that human greed makes it impossible for anyone to become totally disenchanted with the love of the world. However, everything is possible with God. When the Holy Spirit changes the hearts of those who love money, they are able to enter the spiritual kingdom of Christ, because their new hearts will love God more than wealth.

**"Peter answered him, 'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.'" (Matthew 19:27-30)**

The mention of money moved Peter to ask the following question: "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Christ told him that they would receive special providence in this world, with persecutions to test their faith and increase their reward. Then, in the world to come, they will inherit everlasting life. In this connection, he repeated something he said earlier and would say again shortly: "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

#### **4.7. The Parable of the Farm Workers**

**"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 'Because no one has hired us', they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour', they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not**

**being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'" (Matthew 20:1-16)**

In response to the question of Peter, concerning what would be left for them since they had left everything, Christ related an illustration about farm workers. The owner hired farm hands at different times of the day, with some being hired one hour before the end of the day. He agreed on a wage of one denarius for those who were hired early. As for the late comers, he told them they would be paid what they deserved. At the end of the day, he paid all the workers the same amount, asking his foreman to first pay the ones hired last, giving them a whole day's wages. This generosity created resentment in those who had put in a whole day's labour, and so they grumbled. The landowner rebuked them and reminded them that they had no right to judge him on how he spent his money. Moreover, the one who is paid his full dues has no right to envy those who obtain more than their dues.

In this parable, we learn of the error of those who complain when others succeed more than they. We also see the mistake of those who protest over the lack of equality in God's dealings with man. Every sensible person can realise that even the most miserable in the world have had more than they deserve of earthly blessings and heavenly mercy. Moreover, when it comes to divine dealings, there is not a single soul which can claim to have been ill-treated.

#### **4.8. A New Announcement Regarding the Cross**

**"Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!' Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 'What is it you want?' he asked. She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.' 'You don't know what you are asking', Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?' 'We can', they answered. Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.' When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:17-28)**

As Christ approached Jerusalem, the shadow of the Cross before him became clearer, and he felt more burdened by the weight of the world's sin which he had come to bear. He took his disciples aside and, for the third time, told them in greater detail of his coming sufferings and



death. Since they would be with him when these dreadful events took place, he did not want them to accompany him except by their own choice, after they had learned the facts. He explained to them that he would be delivered to the high priests and scribes who would sentence him to death. Then, contrary to religious rule, these men would, hand him over to the Gentiles. He told them that he would be scourged, insulted, spat upon, and crucified, and that three days later he would rise from the dead.

In spite of all these clarifications, it appears that his disciples still did not understand his words. Two of his disciples, James and John, came with their mother, Salome, who asked him a favour. She was the aunt of Jesus, and she asked if he could grant her two sons the most prominent positions in his kingdom. She wanted one to sit at his right hand and the other on his left. Salome was confident that she would be granted this wish from her nephew, especially since she had left her home and followed him on his travels with the disciples. She had given of her wealth for their expenses, and had noticed her sons being distinguished at the house of Jairus and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Little did Salome or her sons realise that a person does not obtain honour by merely asking for it, but rather, by merit. Thus, sacrifice and self-denial, not greed and ambition, are the doorway to divine approval. For this reason, Christ said to his disciples: "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" When they hastily replied that they could, he did not contradict them, but went on to explain that preference in his kingdom is reserved only for those to whom his Father bestows it. He, as the Son of Man on earth, could not grant this.

The rest of the disciples were upset with James and John, so Christ admonished them. He told them that the road to mastery in his kingdom starts at the bottom, with servanthood. When people take on the attributes and function of servants, in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, others will soon see the spread of spiritual blessing and godliness in the world.

#### 4.9. Christ Saves Zacchaeus

**"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a "sinner." ' But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'" (Luke 19:1-10)**

Christ entered Jericho to bring the message of repentance and faith to the house of

Zacchaeus, a wealthy chief tax-collector. This man must have heard of the fame of Christ who had opened the door of repentance and salvation to other tax collectors. He wanted to see Jesus, and when he could not catch sight of him, owing to his short stature and the crowd all around, he noticed a sycamore tree whose branches stretched over the road. He ran and climbed onto one of the branches, not caring what people thought of him. Christ rewarded him when he reached that tree, for he stopped the procession and called Zacchaeus by name, telling him to come down quickly and to welcome him into his home. In so doing, Christ intended to do an important spiritual work in him. Even though his profession, prominence, wealth, character, and past conduct made him one of the least likely to enter the kingdom of God, Jesus nevertheless chose this tax collector for salvation, not regarding the disapproval of the crowd for such an action.

Christ's cup of joy overflowed when Zacchaeus stood in front of all those present, announcing his repentance and its outcome: "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." What the rich young ruler refused to do, Zacchaeus, the outcast tax collector, did. God changed his heart, enabling him to do the impossible, taking away his love of money; and so a "camel passed through the eye of a needle" into the kingdom of heaven. Christ declared that this man was saved, and repeated that the Son of Man had come for the very purpose of saving that which was lost.

Zacchaeus is an example of those who will not allow anything to stop them from coming to the Saviour. They are converted suddenly, and, without delay, present conclusive proof to the reality of their conversion because their faith results in action. Blind Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus became the first-fruits of the Church in Jericho. Most likely, they joined the procession which left Jericho, going up to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast.

#### 4.10. Christ Visits the Home of Lazarus

**"Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 'Leave her alone', Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'" (John 12:1-8)**

Christ and his disciples reached the village of Bethany and stayed at the home of Lazarus, the beloved, who had recently been raised from the dead. They were invited to a feast at the

house of Simon, the leper, who, according to tradition, was the husband of Martha. The Gospel mentions that Lazarus was among those at the table with Jesus, while Martha was involved in the domestic preparations. Mary is also mentioned, for she brought a bottle of precious perfume and broke it, anointing the head and feet of Christ. Afterwards, she wiped them with her hair as a sign of gratitude and honour toward her Saviour. The sweet smell filled the place in the same way that the smallest deed done for the love of the Saviour pervades the whole place with its sweet aroma; it need not be more than a cup of cold water which one offers to the lowliest of his followers.

Those who do good are rarely free from the faultfinding of others, and, on this occasion, there was some bitter objection to the apparent extravagance of Mary. Most likely, Judas Iscariot originated this criticism and provoked the others, for he was the keeper of the money bag, and used to give to the poor as well as pilfer from it. His argument for the poor thus proved to be insincere. Some of the other disciples naively joined in this attack, siding with Judas' claim that this act on Mary's part was an unnecessary waste, and that it would have been better to give the price of the perfume to the needy.

Christ did not leave Mary at the mercy of the attackers, but scolded the critics and commanded her action. It was as if, in a spirit of prophecy, she had anointed his body with perfume in preparation for his embalming only a few days later. Refuting the objection, he said that he would be leaving them shortly; therefore, it would no longer be possible for them to honour him in this way. As for the poor, they would always be there and could receive charity at any time. He comforted Mary by saying, "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." (Matthew 26:13).

## 5. Christ The King Enters Jerusalem

**"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.' This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 'Say to the Daughter of Zion, "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."' ' The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!' When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'" (Matthew 21:1-11)**

Christ, accompanied by his disciples and a crowd, left Bethany on Sunday morning and headed for Jerusalem. A welcoming group from the city came out to meet him. He sent two

disciples to a nearby village to look for a donkey and its colt, which they were to bring back. If questioned by the owner, they were to say that the Master needed them. The owner would then let them proceed with their plans. Christ's prediction was fulfilled, which proved his greatness and knowledge of the future. If we consider the fact that the owner of the two beasts was not a disciple or devotee, the pre-eminence of Christ is further enhanced, for it showed his knowledge about this man's thoughts and will.

One wonders why Christ chose this particular moment to enter Jerusalem in this way. The answer is that the Jews used to separate a lamb -- which symbolised Christ -- on the tenth day of Nisan (approximately April), and prepare it for sacrifice five days later when they would eat it. Therefore, it was not strange to find Christ -- the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world -- publicly set apart on the same day, along with the many lambs which symbolised him. He was then put to death on the Cross at the same time they were being slaughtered in the Temple five days later.

The life of Christ covers a span of approximately thirty-three years, and the four evangelists devote one sixth of their accounts of the Gospel to one day; namely, that of the death of Christ and its surrounding events. The five days before his death and the two days after it are called the "Passion Week", and they occupy more than a quarter of the Gospel.

Christ rode on the colt after his followers had placed some garments on its back, and when the incoming and outgoing multitudes met, enthusiasm mounted and they competed with each other in honouring Christ, recounting with applause his miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. They also marched around, carrying palm fronds which were symbols of victory, shouting hosanna or "save us", and spreading the fronds and articles of clothing along the road.

The crowd rejoiced and praised God for all the miracles Christ had performed. In their joy, the people were shouting: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9) This applause is taken from Psalm 118 because the crowd believed Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah and the coming Son of David who was to restore the glories of David's political kingdom. They did not understand the spiritual meaning of the salvation he came to offer, for it was to free people from the bondage of sin. Therefore, these same people who were cheering him on as their king would soon lose their enthusiasm. Christ would indeed be crowned during the ensuing week; but mockingly, with a crown of thorns. They would take off the crown, place a sceptre in his hand, and then snatch it from him, beating him. They would kneel before him and hail him as king; but scoffingly, insulting him, and spitting upon him. Then, they would nail him to a cross. Those who shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" would later reject him, crying, "Crucify him!" "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 9:15)

As Christ entered the city, the Pharisees could not ignore the procession, so they joined the

crowd to see what would happen. They said to one another, "Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (John 12:19). Their orders and official statements regarding Jesus had been ignored by the people, and this made them nervous indeed.

The Pharisees had lost their control over the nation, and now they were full of envy and hatred toward Christ. They were afraid that the people's favourable reception of him would be interpreted by the Roman authorities as a conspiracy, and that they, the leaders, would be punished. As it happened, the Roman governor had come from Caesarea to Jerusalem to look for and thwart any seditious activities against his government during the Feast. For this reason, some Pharisees came to Jesus and told him to rebuke his disciples. But the divine purposes of God determined that praise must be given at this time, for if it were withheld, the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40)! Hence, Christ rejected the request of the Jewish leaders, and continued with this procession.

It was inevitable that Jesus would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, amidst the praises of his people, for in the Torah, Zechariah the prophet had said: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). Christ displayed his amazing authority when he made the multitude participate with him in fulfilling this prophecy literally, despite the schemes of the leaders.

### **5.1. Christ Weeps Over Jerusalem**

**"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.' "**  
**(Luke 19:41-44)**

When the procession was at a point where the Holy City could be seen, and the eyes of Christ were turned towards it, he had a prophetic vision in complete contrast to the beautiful reality of Jerusalem. It was one which some of his followers were yet to behold. All the joy from being in this happy celebration fled from him, and he wept bitterly for Jerusalem which was to be destroyed. This is an example for us to love our country, but also to love the sinners and weep over their destiny.

How amazed that crowd must have been to see him weeping for no apparent reason. All of his soon-approaching suffering, even his being nailed to the Cross, did not cause him to shed tears or groan; but love for this city and her rebellious people made him cry. Their sins and coming calamities melted his tender heart, and so he wept for them. Knowledge of what they were about to do to him in five days increased his compassion, so he shed even more tears.

With his foresight, he saw Jerusalem besieged by Roman armies, the resulting great suffering of her people, and the utter destruction both of the city and the great Temple of God. He saw her walls laid low and burned. He saw the famine which would drive some mothers to sell their offspring for slaughter; some would even eat them, driven mad by hunger. He saw the nation dispersed permanently and its holy rituals stopped.

This destruction would be at the hands of the Caesar whom they had preferred over him. Jesus foresaw the Romans erecting their barricades and casting their destructive missiles at the city. There, they would dig a trench around the walls, fulfilling an ancient prophecy: "Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets." (Jeremiah 26:18). What Jesus saw would literally take place forty years later. During this siege, historians tell us that the Jews endured horrors unmatched in the history of the world. It is said that Titus, the Roman commander, when he entered the city and saw the corpses piled up in the alleys, raised his hands to heaven and called his gods to witness that he was not responsible for this destruction. He laid the-blame upon those who had ordered him to carry out this carnage.

These painful events were all understood by Christ before they happened. At that hour, he was moved by feelings of patriotism, compassion, and a sense of pity and forgiveness for those about to kill him. He thought about the enthusiasm of the multitude over him, the joy of his disciples, and the forthcoming annihilation of his cherished city, and he shed bitter tears over its beloved but rebellious people. And so, addressing Jerusalem, he said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes." He closed by saying, "They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

The procession entered Jerusalem from its great eastern gate near the Temple. From the continuous cheering and the strewn palm branches, all the city knew that an important event was taking place. Passers-by, residents, and shopkeepers alike were asking, "Who is this?" The reply was: "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matthew 21:10,11).

When the crowd reached the Temple, it was late in the day. Jesus witnessed all the activities around him and understood the important and perilous task which lay before him. But he would have to carry it out on the following day, for the Temple gates were about to close. Not wishing to spend the night inside the city, where the authorities might have been tempted to seize him prematurely, he returned with his disciples to Bethany.

## 5.2. Christ Curses a Barren Fig Tree

**"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his**

**disciples heard him say it." (Mark 11:12-14)**

While going on to Jerusalem, Christ saw a fig tree showing signs of fruit -- even though it was not the season for figs. It caught his attention, so he went towards it, hoping to find fruit. Some fig trees bear an early fruit which is small and very sweet, and since this tree was leafy, Jesus expected to find these early figs, but found none. This tree, therefore, became an example of the sin of hypocrisy and the failure to do good, which is the same as unfruitfulness. Thus, he blighted the tree, saying, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." He said this to teach his disciples and us the necessity of bearing fruit. His action was prompted not by frivolity, as that would have been inconsistent with his character.

His disciples would remember this miracle for the rest of their lives because it supported the saying of John the Baptist: "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10). Despite the evil of the hypocrites, however, Jesus did not punish any of them, but only rebuked them. He did not come to judge the world but to save it.

## **6. Christ Cleanses The Temple**

The Temple symbolised Christ, the mediator between God and man. All must go through him in order to approach God because Christ himself said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus reached the Temple with his disciples, where the urgent work of reform awaited them. The effects of his previous cleansing had worn off, and the old, detestable customs had returned. Among these practices was the use of the Gentile's Court as a marketplace. Being the Lord of the Temple, Jesus cleansed it, so that it could be used for its dual purpose of healing and teaching.

Whenever Christ performed miracles of healing, he concluded with miracles of teaching. He taught the world that God blesses man through acts of mercy, his Temple, and the Sabbath. And so, by triumphing over the Jewish elders, disease, and ignorance, his followers and their attachment to him increased. We read that the crowds were amazed at his words.

### **6.1. Jesus Drives out the Moneychangers**

**"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it "a den of robbers".' The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city." (Mark 11:15-19)**



In the second cleansing of the Temple, Christ did not allow anyone carrying merchandise to pass through, and he used stronger language than previously. The first time, he had said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:16). This time, however, he said, "Is it not written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of robbers.'" He observed the dishonest practices of the merchants in the Temple area and noticed that most of the nation, including its leaders, were robbing God of his due.

Prophecy describes Christ as being righteous and victorious: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). By expelling the traders, Jesus showed his justice, and the leaders were unable to restrain him; and since he planned to hand himself over to his enemies that week, he fully employed the authority which he would yield later in order to complete the work of Redemption. By expelling the merchants from the Temple area once more, he demonstrated his power.

That night, after his second cleansing of the Temple, Jesus left the city. He would return on Tuesday morning to take leave of the Temple which had become a den of thieves. He would never return to the Temple after that day.

## 6.2. A Lesson In Faith

**"In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!' 'Have faith in God', Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea", and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.' "** (Mark 11:20-26)

Before Jesus and his disciples arrived at the Temple, they reached the place in the road where the fig tree had been cursed the day before. Peter drew the attention of his master to the fact that it had withered, and Christ used this situation as a springboard to teach them all a new lesson in faith. Also, he repeated the basic condition for a prayer to be answered: the petitioner must forgive anyone who has wronged him, with all his heart.

## 6.3. The Authority of Jesus is Questioned

After Christ had cleansed the Temple the first time, the Jews asked of him a sign. When he returned to the Temple on Tuesday morning after having cleansed it the second time, they asked him who it was that had given him the authority to do what he did.



**""By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you authority to do this?' Jesus replied, 'I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism-- was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!' They discussed it among themselves and said, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?" But if we say, "From men"....' (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know.' Jesus said, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.' (Mark 11:28-33)**

The Jewish leaders could see no way to make Jesus fall, so they sought to alienate the hearts of the nation from him by means of certain questions designed to trap him. They hoped he would reply in a manner which would cause the crowds to dislike him, so that when he was seized, the people would not resist. As Christ was walking in the Temple, the leaders asked him from where he had received the authority for cleansing. They, being its agents and managers, were anointed and had received their authority officially from their forefathers. They also had the endorsement of the government.

Prophetic authority at all times comes directly from God who raised prophets without consulting or seeking permission from anyone. But for hundreds of years, no prophet had appeared except John the Baptist, whom the leaders disbelieved. Jesus asked his examiners to first identify the source of the Baptist's authority. If they acknowledged that it was from heaven, they would be judging themselves, since they did not accept the message of the Baptist. On the other hand, if they denied it, they feared that the people would stone them because the crowds considered the Baptist to be a true prophet. In their fear, they took refuge in a lie and said that they did not know. Christ's question made them angry, and he refused to tell them by whose authority he was acting, knowing the motives of their renegade hearts. He then proceeded to relate more parables to them.

#### **6.4. The Parable of the Two Sons**

**""What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not', he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir', but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?' 'The first', they answered. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.' "**  
**(Matthew 21:28-32)**

Earlier, the leaders of the Jews were at a loss for words, but not Jesus. He told them a parable of two sons whose father asked them to go and work in the field. The first refused, but later repented and went. The second promised to go, but did not follow through. The first son erred in his speech, but acted in the right way. As for the second, his sin was in failing to act,

which is much more serious than merely failing in what he said. Christ meant by this that even though the leaders spoke honourably, they cancelled out their words by not doing the will of God. Others, however, did not pretend to be religious; yet, they kept the Divine Law better than their leaders. When Jesus asked them which of the two sons carried out the wishes of his father, they replied, "The first." Thus, he showed them that tax collectors and prostitutes resembled the first son because they repented of their evil when they heard the preaching of the Baptist, being baptised by him. It was they, the Pharisees, who resembled the second son, because they made a verbal claim to piety, yet did the opposite. By agreeing that the first son acted rightly in his conduct, they admitted that the tax collectors and prostitutes were superior to them.

### 6.5. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

**""Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son', he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end', they replied, 'and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes"'? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.' When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet." (Matthew 21:33-46)**

Christ presented a parable which revealed the wickedness of the leaders who would plot against him and execute him that same week. The tenants in the parable, after killing the servants of the landowner, finally killed his son in an attempt to seize the inheritance. When Christ asked them what they thought the landowner would do with them, they replied, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end." Jesus agreed with their response and said, "...the kingdom of God will be taken away from you." He reminded them of the words of the prophet David: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone" (Psalm 118:22). Those who opposed him would be bruised, but those whom he would oppose would be crushed. The Apostle Peter remembered this saying and repeated it when the Jewish leaders persecuted him after Christ had ascended into heaven (Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7).

## 6.6. The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

**""The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, "Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet." But they paid no attention and went off-- one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. "Friend", he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are invited, but few are chosen."" (Matthew 22:2-4)**

The parable of the wicked tenants angered the leaders because Christ told it in order to judge them. They renewed their efforts to arrest him, but their fear of the people prevented them; so they left him alone. Christ remained because he had not finished his final teachings in the Temple. He presented a third parable in which a king held a banquet in honour of the marriage of his son. This king gave each of the invited guests a royal garment, but when he went in to greet the guests, he noticed a person who was not wearing the appropriate attire. It seems that this person preferred his own clothes, was proud of them, and refused to be dressed like all the others. Besides, he probably did not want to be obligated to the king for his garments. When the king asked him the reason for not conforming to his regulations, he was at a loss for words, showing that he was at fault. He earned his reward, because the role of kings is to execute all who disobey their orders. Therefore, the king told his men, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness." This man was punished, not for any evil he had done, but for the good he had failed to do. No matter how upright a man is in his own eyes and in the eyes of others, God will punish him for being self-righteous and neglecting to wear the robe of righteousness which he alone offers.

In the Parable of the Two Sons, the Wicked Tenants, and the Wedding Banquet, Christ proclaimed that his being rejected by the Jewish leaders was compensated by his being accepted by the tax collectors. His being denied by the Jewish nation was counterbalanced by his subsequent acceptance from other Gentile nations. As for the words, "For many are invited but few are chosen", we do not believe that they apply to all generations, but that they referred specifically to his own generation, especially to the Jewish nation.

## 7. Christ Answers The Jewish Elders

In order to press its fight, an army may even join forces with its former enemies, making them allies. Likewise, the leaders of the Jews joined forces with their foes, the Herodians, the party of King Herod, in their battle against Christ. After consultation, these political and religious authorities agreed on a new offensive.

### 7.1. Render to Caesar What is His

**"Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?' But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. 'Why are you trying to trap me?' he asked. 'Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' They brought the coin, and he asked them, 'Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?' 'Caesar's', they replied. Then Jesus said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.' And they were amazed at him." (Mark 12:13-17)**

The plan of the Herodians, under the guise of religiosity, was to catch Christ by his words and then deliver him into the hands of the Procurator (governor). They approached him with flattery, and then asked whether they should pay taxes to the Roman government or not. Their hope was to trap him in whichever way he answered. If he said "Yes", the people would be upset with him because they were tired of this tax which was a symbol of their bondage to the Romans, and from which they hoped their Messiah would liberate them when he came. If, however, he said that they should not pay as the Herodians hoped, it would give them a strong enough reason to hand him over to the government as a man rebelling against the Caesar who had imposed this tax.

Jesus knew their deceitful, insincere acclamation, and was aware that a reply which would please the Pharisees would not please the Herodians. He answered their questions by first asking them to show him a coin which bore the image of Caesar on it; this confronted them with Caesar's authority over them. His verdict was: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." In other words, he said to give everyone his due. By his reply, Jesus foiled the trap which they had set for him, and his words have become the rule in matters of religious and civic duty. The Jewish elders were unable to elicit even one faulty word from him in front of the people, so they quietly left him and went their way.

God had permitted Caesar to rule over the Jews, and so it was their responsibility to submit to his jurisdiction. Just as the picture of Caesar on the coin reminded them of what they owed him, so too the image of God in every person should also have reminded them of what God expected from them. From these words of Christ, we see that submission to the state is wholly acceptable, but it should never supersede our obedience to God. The question of whether we should submit to the state or to God is not raised here, because we should obey both. Moreover, submission to the state in what does not conflict with the demands of God is

part of our religious worship.

## 7.2. A God of the Living, Not the Dead

**"Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 'Teacher', they said, 'Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?' Jesus replied, 'Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising-- have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!' "** (Mark 12:18-27)

The Sadducees generally belittled the supernatural, not believing in the resurrection of the dead nor in angels and spirits. By their question, they tried to put Jesus in a position where they could make fun of him. They fabricated a problem related to the world of spirits inhabited by the souls of the departed. The Law of Moses required the eldest living brother of a dead man, who had been married and never had children, to marry his widow in order to provide offspring for his deceased brother.

Seeking to trap Jesus, they presented an account of a woman who had been married to seven brothers, one after the other. Their question was: "At the resurrection whose wife will she be?"

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and the world of spirits, as did Christ. Therefore, a defeat for him in front of the Sadducees would also be a defeat for them. But the superiority of Christ in debate assured the victory for the position of the Pharisees -- at least for the moment. But this triumph of the Pharisees actually spelled defeat, for it raised the prestige of Christ among the people who became even more attached to him.

In this address to the Sadducees, we notice that Christ was gentler than he was with the Pharisees. This is because he regarded the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to be worse than the unbelief of the Sadducees. He did not proclaim woes against the Sadducees nor refer to them as hypocrites, but he did accuse them of being mistaken because they did not know the Scriptures nor the power of God. The sin of the Sadducees was lighter than that of the Pharisees who knew a lot but did not act according to their knowledge.

Christ gave them evidence from the Scriptures that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, thereby confirming the reality of the resurrection. God is spirit, and there is a world of spirits more vast than the material world. Had they known the Scriptures, they would not

have denied the resurrection of the dead. Had they known the power of God, they would not have limited and confined it to the small material world.

Christ explained to his listeners that the world of spirits cannot be measured exactly in the same way as the material world. Thus, physical marriage has no existence there, for all who share in the resurrection of the righteous will be like the angels in heaven. The crowd was amazed at his teaching, and some of the scribes were more pleased over the failure of the Sadducees than over Christ's successful answer. One scribe in particular perceived that Jesus had answered them well (Mark 12:28), and because of this, the current of opposition against him grew slightly weaker. No one dared to ask him any more questions.

### 7.3. The Greatest Commandment

**"One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' 'The most important one', answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.' 'Well said, teacher', the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions." (Mark 12:28-34)**

A legal expert, wanting to test the knowledge of Christ in matters of the Law, asked Jesus which the greatest commandment was. Christ replied that it was to love the Lord God with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. The next one, equally important, was to love one's neighbour as oneself. All the Law and prophets depended on these two. The teacher commended Christ's reply, and Jesus responded by saying that this man was not far from the kingdom of God because he had such a grasp of the Law. Perhaps this teacher of the Law also realised that the state of someone not far from the kingdom is worse than that of one far away. How bitter is the loss of those who come just outside the door of the kingdom but fail to enter in!

### 7.4. The Descendant of David is Lord

**"While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, 'How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him "Lord". How then can he be his son?' The large crowd listened to him with delight." (Mark 12:35-37)**

While teaching in the Temple, Christ awaited an opportunity to test the Pharisees as they had



tested him. He asked them to explain a verse from the Psalms of David. In it, God addresses a person whom David called "my Lord". This person, according to Jewish interpretation, is the Messiah; at the same time, he is the Son of David. How can he be the Lord and Son of David at the same time? Nothing resolves this seeming contradiction except the mystery of Christ's dual nature which makes him the Lord of David in his divinity and the Son of David in his humanity. This is the description which the Book of Revelation applies to Christ: the "Root and the offspring of David" (Revelation 22:16). Since the Pharisees had denied his divinity, not one of them could respond, and so he silenced all his enemies and pleased the crowds with his words. The Scripture often says that the people marvelled at the words of Christ. Countless others have been gladdened by his words since that time until the present.

### 7.5. Christ Praises the Offering of a Widow

**"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything-- all she had to live on.' "** (Mark 12:41- 44)

Jesus moved from the inner court to the outer one which was also called "the Women's Court". Here were thirteen trumpets to receive donations for the service of the Temple, and works of mercy. Worshippers, after a long absence, returned on the days of the Great Feast to donate large sums toward the maintenance of this unique place of worship. Christ sat beside these trumpets and watched the worshippers drop their offerings into the Temple treasury. When the widow had given two small coins, the smallest gift allowable, he called his disciples to watch, saying, "This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others." Giving out of her poverty, she gave all she had to live on.

Giving has an important place in religious life. Christ taught that the measure of one's giving is not the amount donated, but the amount remaining. Those who make small charitable donations, calling them "the widow's mite" are mistaken. This description cannot be applied to meagre giving, unless it happens to be all that the giver possesses. The widow gave all she had, relying on divine providence to care for her. For this reason, Jesus praised her for her love toward God and trust in his care.

### 7.6. Some Greeks Ask to See Jesus

**"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir', they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it**

**remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine.' " (John 12:20-30)**

The Magi had come from the East to see Christ as an infant, and now another group of people came from the West -- from Greece, the land of philosophers -- to see Christ at the close of his ministry. They stood in the outer court of the Temple, the place set aside for Gentiles to worship the one God, the God of Israel. They let Christ's disciple, Philip, know how eager they were to see Jesus. Philip told Andrew, and they both agreed to let the Master know about this.

Jesus could see that those Greeks were the forerunners of the countless multitude of Gentiles who would seek him by faith, for he said: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). He would be exalted despite his own nation's denial of him. Their rejection would not be a failure for him or his work.

Christ met those Greeks and told them that just as a seed cannot produce fruit unless it "dies" in the earth, so too only those who hate and overcome their sinful nature, through faith in him, can be saved to eternal life. He also taught them about a death which would lead to life -- his own redemptive death which would save souls without number from a life of sin to a life of righteousness on earth, and everlasting life beyond the grave.

At this time, Jesus admitted that his soul was disturbed concerning his impending death. He had come from heaven for this hour. Could he now be spared from it? God forbid! His one desire was to glorify the name of his Father, so he prayed his last and shortest prayer in the Temple, saying, "Father glorify Your name!" The Father honoured this complete surrender and denial of self, for a voice from heaven said, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

When Christ defeated Satan during his temptation in the wilderness, the Father sent angels to minister to him. But his new victory over the fear of the Cross was even greater, so the Father made his voice heard for the third time during the earthly life of Christ. His foes thought that it had thundered; his friends thought it was an angel. But Christ, who alone understood the message of that voice, assured all his listeners that it was not for him but for them, even though they could not understand it. The voice of God had come to them in confirmation of his person and teachings. Thus, by means of this latest triumph, Christ again established his qualification to be the Saviour of the world by being lifted up on the Cross and drawing all people to himself. The magnetism of the Cross still draws many in the world, beyond all human expectation. It attracts individuals and nations, and will not cease its work until the



very heavens declare:

**"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)**

## 8. Christ Prophecies About Future Events

**"As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!' 'Do you see all these great buildings?' replied Jesus. 'Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.' As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?' (Mark 13:1-4)**

Christ was on his way out of the Temple when his disciples commented on the beauty of that great building. Herod, the King, had built it with doors encased in silver and gold. Its stones were huge, some as much as forty-five feet long, six feet wide, and six feet high. Its construction was spectacular. But Jesus looked at them and said, "Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Christ and his group proceeded to the Mount of Olives. While there, his disciples asked him two questions: "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4). His disciples wished to know the time as well as some of the signs which would accompany this occurrence. So Jesus began to explain to them some future events. He first spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem, and then about his Second Coming.

### 8.1. Signs of the Destruction of Jerusalem

#### 8.1.1. A. Preliminary Signs

**"Jesus said to them: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he", and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.'" (Mark 13:5- 8)**

The disciples had asked about the time when the Temple would be destroyed, and then about the signs of that destruction. Jesus answered the second question first, beginning with the "birth pangs":

1. **Deception.** Many deceivers were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. These false Messiahs actually appeared. They told the Jews that they would deliver them from

Roman bondage, but they were liars (see Acts 21,38).

2. **Wars.** Many wars between the Jews and other nations took place before the destruction of Jerusalem. There was a war between the Jews of Alexandria and the Egyptians in the year 38 AD. Also, there was a war in Seleucia, Syria, in which 50,000 Jews perished.
3. **Earthquakes, Famines, and Troubles.** These really occurred: earthquakes in Crete, Rome, and Jerusalem; famines, such as the one foretold by Agabus in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28); and troubles such as the clashes between the Jews and Samaritans and the Jews and the Greeks, in which some 20,000 Jews died.

All these events happened before Jerusalem was destroyed, and they were only signs of the beginning of tribulations.

### 8.1.2. B. Immediate Signs

""You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you see "the abomination that causes desolation" standing where it does not belong-- let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now-- and never to be equaled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. At that time if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, there he is!" do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect-- if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time."" (Mark 13:9-23)

Jesus described the signs which would indicate that the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand:

1. **The First Sign: Persecution**(verses 9-13). Jesus alerted his disciples to the sufferings which awaited them, which would be followed by glory. The persecutions would first come from outside, such as from Jewish Council members who would flog them and make them stand trial before rulers and kings for their testimony of Christ. Jesus encouraged his followers, so that they would not worry or prepare for self-defence. The Holy Spirit would speak through them and give them the correct response. But persecutions would also come from within -- from family members. In Matthew's account of the Gospel, it says that many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other during that time (Matthew 24:10). The faith of some Christians would grow weak, leading them even to betray their brethren to persecution and torture. Christ told

them that they would be hated by everyone for his name.

In the midst of the persecution, however, encouragement would come; namely, the Gospel would be preached to the nations. This persecution would ensure that, and it was to occur before the destruction of Jerusalem. Paul the Apostle, in his letter to the Colossians, which was probably written sometime between 60-64 AD, wrote that the Gospel was already producing fruit and growing (Colossians 1:6). In the same chapter, verse twenty-three, he adds that this Gospel was preached to every creature under heaven. The disciples, therefore, could take heart because their persecution and scattering would carry the message of Christ to everyone. Another cause for encouragement would be that those enduring to the end would be saved.

2. **The Second Sign: "the abomination that causes desolation"**(verses 14-23). The prophet Daniel referred to this in his Book (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), pointing prophetically to the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC), who stopped the Temple offerings and set up idol worship in their place. That was a long time before the birth of Christ; yet, Jesus was saying that something like it would happen again. His words pointed to the Roman soldiers marching into Jerusalem, carrying images of their eagles and kings which they worshipped. Jesus, in Luke's account of the Gospel, is quoted as having said, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20). He signified that the "abomination" would be the Roman armies and their symbols where they should not have been -- in the Holy Temple and the Holy City.

This then was to be the sure sign of the destruction of Jerusalem: the city would be surrounded by Roman armies who would conquer it. Jesus warned his disciples of those days, and said that Christians should flee to the distant mountains, no matter where they happen to be. As for pregnant and nursing mothers, their flight would obviously be more difficult. Christ asked his disciples to pray that their escape would not be in winter, because the tribulation coming to Jerusalem would be unequalled in history.

Despite this depressing picture, Christ gave a ray of encouragement (verse 20): those days would be shortened for the sake of the elect (chosen). But the great distress would cause many to cling to any glimmer of hope, believing the false prophets and messiahs who offered deliverance. Thus, many would be deceived -- even among the elect, if possible.

All these predictions of Christ came true when Jerusalem was destroyed. The Roman general, Gallus, besieged Jerusalem in 66 AD, and Vespasian followed suit in 68 AD. During this latter siege, Christians who knew the words of Christ fled out of the city, and not one perished. Later, the Roman general, Titus, attacked Jerusalem in the year 70 AD until it fell. He killed roughly 1.5 million Jews. Many were crucified until there was no space for more crosses. Thus, the words of Christ came true: "Because those will be days

of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now-- and never to be equaled again."

The Temple was destroyed and put to the torch. The siege was relatively short compared with that of other cities. Its brevity is especially startling, considering the fact that Jerusalem is naturally impregnable, being built on mountains. Titus, who conquered the great city, refused any personal responsibility for its destruction. He gave God full credit for granting victory in the siege. In essence, God did grant Titus this victory because of the sins of the Jews.

Christ informed his disciples of the coming events, saying, "So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time." Because they understood and regarded his words, they escaped the great tribulation which befell Jerusalem.

## 8.2. The Second Coming of Christ

**""But in those days, following that distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."" (Mark 13:24-27)**

After describing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus started to speak about his second coming. He said, "But in those days, following that distress..." referring to the time after the annihilation of the Holy City. The exact time of his second coming cannot be ascertained, for a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as a day (2 Peter 3:8). The reference to events in the skies has been understood to mean the fall of great men and the shaking of kings. It also signifies that the heavens will vanish in a great inferno. The elements will melt and disintegrate, and the world and everything in it will be consumed (2 Peter 3:10). Then, the Son of Man will come in the clouds and with great power to resurrect the dead and judge the world. He will come in glory and majesty, and will send out his angels to the ends of the earth to gather his chosen ones.

## 8.3. The Time of the Destruction of Jerusalem

**""Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."" (Mark 13:28-33)**

Earlier, when Christ mentioned the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, his disciples

wanted to know when this would be and what signs would precede it. Jesus answered their second question first, explaining the signs to them. He then addressed their first inquiry regarding the time of these events with an analogy from nature: "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near." He then said that that generation would certainly not pass away until everything had happened. Amazingly, many of the first-century Christians witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in their lifetime. The words of Christ were fulfilled according to his words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." As far as predicting the exact time when Jerusalem would be destroyed, Jesus said that neither he, as the Son of Man, nor the angels knew, but only the Father; so he concluded his words with an exhortation to take heed, watch, and pray.

We are tempted to wonder why Christ did not know. The answer is that he came in flesh as the Son of Man, even though he was God (1 Timothy 3:16); and doing so, he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7). Christ the Lord knew everything, but Christ the Man did not know the day nor the hour of Jerusalem's destruction. Even though we cannot understand how this can be, we can choose to believe him with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul described the Holy Spirit as being indispensable to the faith of a believer when he wrote: "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

## 8.4. Keeping Watch

**""It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!" ' '(Mark 13:34.37).**

Christ spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem, and then described his second coming. These things were to happen at a time which no man knew about, and his word, "watch", is for everyone. The parable, in connection with his exhortation to watch, is one in which a man gave his servants tasks, instructing the doorman to keep vigil because his return would be sudden. In those days, the night was divided into four parts, each consisting of three hours, and servants did not know in which part of the night their master would come.

Dear Reader,

What is the task to which God has entrusted you? How do you behave as a husband or father in the home? How is your conduct among your colleagues at work? Do not forget that each is assigned his task. What is required of you? Are you performing your duty faithfully? Today we know that Christ is coming, but we know not the day or hour. Christ tells us to watch

because the enemy surrounds us from within and without! Watch, because you have a responsibility to serve God! Watch, because in a short while your Lord will return and reward you! May Christ find us watching when he comes!

## 8.5. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

**""At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." "No", they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" But he replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."" (Matthew 25:1-13)**

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, there is a bridegroom whose wedding was not yet due. There were two groups involved; one was prepared, the other, unprepared. When the time for the wedding came, those in the latter group thought that they could either get help from those who were prepared, or that they would still have enough time to get ready themselves. But when the bridegroom arrived and the wedding started, they realised their mistake. When they asked for mercy, the master responded with the sad and fearful words, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." They were therefore not allowed to partake in the banquet.

Through this parable, Christ wanted to teach the importance of being prepared for his coming and the Day of Reckoning. It is vain to imagine, as some teach, that the virtue of the saints will overflow and be available to help others obtain forgiveness and enter heaven. Likewise, this parable obliterates the hope of those who imagine that divine mercy towards sinners extends beyond the grave.

## 8.6. The Parable of the Talents

**""Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. "Master", he said, "you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more." His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.**

Come and share your master's happiness!" The man with the two talents also came. "Master", he said, "you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more." His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" Then the man who had received the one talent came. "Master", he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you." His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matthew 25:14-30)

The Parable of the Talents shows that God gives people different talents, yet the reward for diligence and faithfulness is the same. Both servants who brought their master a profit received the same approval, even though one earned less than the other. But the one who did not try to make a profit was condemned and thrown to the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. He was not punished for stealing or committing evil, but for being lazy and neglecting his gift. There is no doubt that the greatest gift of God to man is eternal salvation. Therefore, the greatest judgement and the bitterest weeping and gnashing of teeth will be for those who neglect this priceless gift which Christ purchased for them by his death on the Cross.

## 8.7. The Great Day of Judgement

""When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'" (Matthew 25:31-46)



---

The conclusion of this address to the disciples on the Mount of Olives was both moving and exceedingly beneficial. Christ described the gathering of humanity on the Day of Judgement. At that time, the Lord will appear in all his glory as Judge upon his glorious throne, and all his holy angels will be with him. The nations will gather before him, and, as the Good Shepherd who knows his own, he will separate the sheep from the goats by putting the former on his right in a place of acceptance and honour, and the latter on his left in the place of judgement. When those who are rejected see Christ, who in his mercy and boundless love died as a ransom for all, they will find no excuse for having failed to come to him for salvation. At that time, they will realise that he, as a merciful High Priest, would always have been ready to receive them, for he fully understood the frailties of mankind, having been tempted in every way as we. Yet, for them it will then be too late.

The Judge will then proclaim the reward reserved for those on his right. An inheritance prepared before the foundation of the earth awaits them, for they are the blessed of the Father, and he has prepared it for them. He will also declare the portion of those on his left, which was not originally prepared for them; namely, the eternal fire appointed for Satan and his angels. They chose to be led by the Devil in spite of the purposes of God and the means he had made available for their salvation. Thus, they will have no excuse when God sends them to the place of Satan, the ruler whom they followed during their earthly lives. They preferred allegiance to him over obedience to the Saviour. The fundamental reason for their judgement is their refusal to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord. Because they left this most important duty undone, they did not do what was expected of his followers, ignoring the special work which he assigns them -- helping the unfortunate and needy, especially his followers whom he referred to as "brothers of mine."

Through this illustration, Christ made it clear that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting prisoners and the sick, hosting strangers, and performing other charitable activities, done out of love for him, is like doing it to him personally. The doer is rewarded not only for his deed but also for his motive. Likewise, those who fail to do these things for others, because of their lack of love for Christ, are treated as if they had failed to do them for him. God is just as interested in the good a man fails to do as in the evil he commits; both will send him to hell. This is one of the hardest lessons, and very few learn it.

Judas Iscariot stands as an example of one who surrendered himself completely to the sway of Satan. This led him inevitably to the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. His inner alienation from Christ was evidenced three days earlier when he protested against Mary anointing his feet in Bethany. The other disciples may not have noticed his actions, owing to the goodness of their hearts. Most likely, while Jesus was speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, Judas devised a reasonable excuse to leave them, returning to Jerusalem to follow through on what the Devil had suggested to him. One can imagine that his conscience put up a strong fight as he wondered how to employ the antagonism of the Jews toward



Christ as a means of gaining their money and friendship. He would need their help once his support from the common purse had ceased, and he no longer had opportunity to steal from it. He did not learn from Christ's claim that his kingdom was not of this world, and that the fate of his followers would be opposition, insults, and degrading persecutions. Did he not understand that Christ knew his innermost thoughts and secrets? Because he was not inclined toward repentance and righteousness, these factors served to estrange him from Jesus. It was then that Satan got into him and became ruler of his heart.

### 8.8. The Elders of the Jews Conspire

**"When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 'As you know, the Passover is two days away-- and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.' Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. 'But not during the Feast', they said, 'or there may be a riot among the people.'**

**"Then one of the Twelve-- the one called Judas Iscariot-- went to the chief priests and asked, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.'" (Matthew 26:1-5; 14-16)**

A meeting that day, in the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, was presided over by Satan. Also present were the Chief Priests, scribes, and elders of the nation, who were deciding how to arrest Jesus and put him to death. Since they could no longer tolerate Christ, they wanted to do this before the Feast if possible. But the wise among them realised that the nation would not support them in their purpose. They decided to wait until after the Feast when the crowds -- especially Christ's fellow Galileans -- would return home. That was the decision of the Council of the Sanhedrin. As for the council of heaven, it had, since eternity, determined the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to occur during the Passover Feast. Thus, any other decision on the part of the Sanhedrin would have been in vain.

For an agreed sum of money, Judas had promised to facilitate the secret arrest of Jesus before the Feast. No doubt, the leaders dealt with him cautiously at first because they hardly expected a disciple of Christ to desert him. They most likely asked for sufficient proof to guarantee his loyalty to them. When he asked for money, he displayed his complete betrayal of Christ. The elders of the Jews probably saw a positive sign in Judas' participation, assuming that the other disciples would follow his example and betray Jesus as well. They were very happy with Judas' promise to hand Christ over to them secretly. They would then deliver him hastily to the Roman authorities. After that, there would be no fear of the crowds being able to defend him.

Because the elders did not need Judas' help after the Feast, the wages agreed upon were meagre. They paid him mainly as an end to speeding up the arrest. Judas accepted his small

reward, thinking that his part was of no consequence. However, he was seriously wrong and woke up to the fact in a startling fashion as we shall soon see.

## 9. Christ Institutes Holy Communion

Christ returned to Bethany in the evening, in the company of his disciples. Thus, Tuesday passed, and the Scriptures are silent about what happened on that Wednesday. Most likely, Jesus and his disciples spent their time quietly in Bethany on this day as well as Thursday. Since Judas was among them, he was unable to deliver his promise to the elders speedily. They may have suspected that his approaching them was a trick, and that he did not intend to fulfil his promise. Meanwhile, he had become more deeply involved in greed and deceit while spying on his Master and friend, awaiting a suitable occasion to betray him.

When the sun rose on Thursday, Christ had only one more night before his crucifixion. He spent that evening eating the Passover meal with his disciples, which has since been known as "The Lord's Supper". Later that night, he prayed in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and shortly after, Judas betrayed him. Then, he was tried illegally at the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. That night was followed by two nights when his precious body lay in the grave. This, in turn, was followed by his glorious resurrection.

**"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He replied, 'Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, "The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house." ' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.'" (Matthew 26:17-19)**

That Thursday morning, Christ showed no inclination of going to Jerusalem. One could conclude that he wished to eat the Passover in Bethany. This observance occurred on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, Nisan (approximately April), and was the first day of the Passover Feast. The disciples made everything ready for the Passover Supper that evening, because preparing the lamb, bitter herbs, wine, and utensils was time-consuming. Jesus sent Peter and John with obscure instructions in order to prevent Judas from knowing the exact location. He told them that the house he wanted to enter would be in the area, and its owner should be informed. They found exactly what they had been told to expect, and a generous man showed them a large, furnished, upper room. There, the two prepared everything according to the Law of Moses.

### 9.1. Christ Washes the Feet of His Disciples

**"It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son**

**of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'No', said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet'. Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.' 'Then, Lord', Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus answered, 'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean." (John 13:1-11)**

At evening, Christ and his ten disciples went to the Upper Room, joining Peter and John. Before taking their place at the table, they had to wash the dust of the road from their feet, because the sandals they wore covered very little of the foot. Usually, servants did this service; when there were no servants, the disciples would wash one another's feet. However, since this was an official meal, and an important one at that, they probably had a certain unwillingness to be servants, each one thinking himself superior. For that reason, they quarrelled among themselves to find out who was the greatest (see Luke 22:24). Most likely, the main person behind this argument was Judas who claimed seniority for himself, being from Judea and holding the office of treasurer for the group. We read that the dispute began after Satan had already prompted Judas to betray Christ.

The Apostle John described how Jesus was fully aware of the complete authority which the Father had given him. This knowledge made his example in humility all the more valuable. The twelve shirked the task of foot-washing, so Christ got up after the others were seated at the table, took off his robe, girded a towel around his waist, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet -- the service they had refused to perform for each other. Lest anyone think that his action was done in anger, John recorded that Christ loved his own to the very end. It was this great unshakeable love which moved him to wash their feet. By this, he gave them an example to follow. His love for them remained to the end of his earthly life, in spite of the extreme testing occasioned by their failures and falls. He even washed the feet of Judas, the traitor, in order to further confirm this truth. Could not this deed have been one of the last means the Saviour used with the scheming Judas, an attempt to soften his hard heart and draw him to repentance and virtue?

John Chrysostom, one of the Church fathers, believed that Christ started with Judas, because he was nearest to him on the left. Most likely, Peter was in front of John, to the right. Thus, Christ would have washed everyone's feet except John's, before coming to Peter. When Peter's turn came, he objected strongly, and was unconvinced when Christ told him he would later understand its significance. Again he protested, faulting his master and despising the submission of his colleagues to this service. He no doubt considered the others to be inferior to him in understanding and behaviour, and for this he earned a stern warning from Christ:

"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." After Christ had said this, we find Peter going overboard, asking to have his hands and head washed. His submission could be described as "false humility" or "inverted pride", for true lowliness makes a person forget himself and think only of others. Christ corrected Peter's error, explaining that there was no need for him to have his hands and head washed.

From these words of Christ, we have a good lesson about sin. The one who has already obtained forgiveness through repentance and faith does not need to have it repeated, for his name is written in the Book of Life. He has received spiritual adoption and has become a child of God. However, since he is not completely immune from failing into sin through weakness or ignorance, he needs forgiveness which is different from the first -- one which resembles the washing of feet only, instead of the whole body. All the disciples were regenerate except Judas. His sins were different from theirs. For this reason, Christ said, "You are clean, though not every one of you." The Apostle John added, "For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean" (John 13:11). The one who truly repents does not return to his old habits but strives to be saved from them. The forgiveness of such a person is secure, and his salvation is decided because he does not depend on his deeds and obedience but on the promises of God and his free mercy. If he reverts to his old ways, his repentance was not real. John described such people in his first epistle: "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us" (1 John 2:19).

**"When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me." I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.' "** (John 13:12-20)

When Christ had finished washing everyone's feet and returned to his place at the head of the table, he told his disciples that true greatness does not depend on wealth, status, wisdom, intelligence, or knowledge, but on serving others. The measure of greatness lies in how much good one does. Christ then repeated his reference to the treachery of Judas, saying that it confirmed the accuracy of the inspired Word and agreed with heavenly counsel, lest anyone should think that Judas' deed contradicted divine providence. There is no doubt that Judas had been baptised by John like the other disciples, and Jesus had even washed his feet as a symbol of cleaning him from sin. This indicates that even the best of external religious

observances, such as the sacraments and other religious rites, do not produce salvation in those who practise them, unless accompanied with a real faith and confidence in Christ.

## 9.2. Christ Eats the Passover

**"When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.' They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, 'Surely not I, Lord?' Jesus replied, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.' Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' Jesus answered, 'Yes, it is you.' "** (Matthew 26:20-25)

We have seen the authority of Christ at the Jerusalem Temple to cleanse it, on the Jewish Sabbath to liberate it, and over the Divine Book to expound it. We now see him seizing control of the Hebrew Passover to change it. The Law in the Torah required that each family should celebrate the Passover Supper together. But Christ elevated spiritual relationships over physical ones, making his disciples his family members in accordance with his words: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). The actual relatives of Jesus were in Jerusalem on the Passover, yet they celebrated it apart from their great kinsman. This shows us the dignified position which Christ granted to his disciples but not to others -- not even to his blessed mother.

During this Passover meal, joy and sadness mingled in the heart of Christ. Expressing his happiness, he said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). He rejoiced as he partook of the Passover Feast, so rich in meaning. In its details and celebration, this institution pointed to the work of salvation which he was soon to accomplish. His hour of victory over the powers and prince of hell was getting close. He would crush the head of the serpent which would bruise his heel (Genesis 3:15). He was also exceedingly glad over the nearness of his return to the bosom of the Father. This also pleased his disciples, for it would confirm them as apostles, enable them to perform great works, and grant them success in their lives.

Despite his joy, Jesus was also sad because all his efforts to reform Judas, the traitor, were unrewarded. This was more irritating than the opposition from the Jewish elders. Christ was also sorrowful over the realisation that all his disciples would lose faith in him that night, fulfilling the prophecy in the Torah which says, "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones" (Zechariah 13:7). Furthermore, his foremost disciple, Simon Peter, would be more outspoken than the others in his temporary denial of him. Jesus grieved over his beloved but weak disciples who were relying on his personal leadership. This was also a moment of painful separation. As the Son of Man, he was troubled over what was in store for him in the way of physical agony and the even more

painful spiritual anguish.

Christ informed his disciples that one of them would deliver him to his enemies, the Jewish elders.

When Judas asked if he were the one, Jesus replied, "Yes, it is you." Dipping a morsel in the bowl of bitter herbs, Jesus handed it to him.

The Jewish Passover ended with Judas refusing to respond to the love Christ was offering him. Scripture says that Satan entered into him; that is, he tightened his hold on Judas. Christ said to him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." The others did not understand, thinking these words referred to some charitable task Jesus wanted him to perform. Taking the last morsel, Judas left; and it was night. That night would be followed by far darker nights of eternal judgement. What a great fall Judas took from the elevated, honoured position among the disciples of Christ down to the depths of treachery, cruelty, despair, and torment, landing in the fires of eternal punishment.

The fall of Judas into hell happened gradually, as it does with others. He fell because he did not watch and pray to be kept from greed and hypocrisy. He went to the place he belonged! His hardness of heart increased because he rejected the gracious endeavours which Christ directed toward him. He followed his own corrupt inclinations when he could still have conquered and mortified them. Thus, he was overpowered and destroyed by them.

Judas left the disciples to look for his new partners, and to inform them that Jesus was nearby where they could easily arrest him. A burden was lifted from the heart of Christ, for he said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified" (John 13:31). At this point, the disciples understood that their master would be delivered to his enemies who would kill him, but they did not grasp the meaning of his death. Therefore, he clarified its purpose to them by means of a new ordinance, visible to the senses: the Lord's Supper. He tied it to the old Passover Supper, making it easier for them to accept and understand.

**"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.' When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:26-30)**

The piece of unleavened bread which Jesus took symbolised freedom from the old leaven and corruption. After breaking it and giving thanks, he passed it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." In the act of giving thanks, he reminded his men to thank the Lord of heaven for every good gift.



Bread does not nourish bodies unless it is first broken. Therefore, when we break the bread together, we are to remember that Christ quickens those who are "dead" in sins because he suffered and died before he rose again. Christ reminded his disciples that he is the one whom the Father had given authority. It is he whose blessings make rich, and he adds no sorrow with it (Proverbs 10:22). When he passed the bread from his hand to theirs, he reminded them that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one can come to the Father except by him. In saying, "Take and eat", he was letting them know that what he was doing for their salvation would be wasted unless they appropriated his life; that is, unless they received it spiritually. Everyone must individually receive him and his work by faith. This spiritual appropriation resembles the physical eating process.

When Jesus said that his body would be broken for them, he made it clear that he was ordaining the broken loaf in this new feast as a symbol of his death for the sins of the world. A year previously, he had spoken some strong words to the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum on the subject of eating his body and drinking his blood in a spiritual sense (John 6). These words, however, offended most of his followers. There was nothing new in the teaching that his body is the Bread of Life which is to be partaken of spiritually at the Lord's Supper. The new significance which those old words took is sufficient to put to rest any literal interpretation which he warned against. The obvious intention of Christ was spiritual, not literal. A spiritual understanding of the words of Christ is also enhanced when one considers that his body was not broken at the exact instant when he said, "This is my body..."; his whole body and the actual loaf were both present at that moment.

Jesus offered them the cup and explained its significance as his blood poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Blood was most important in the Old Testament teachings, ever since the time when God had accepted the blood sacrifice of Abel and rejected the bloodless offering of Cain (Genesis 4). The whole basis of the Mosaic system was based on blood. However, all the blood of goats and rams and other animals had no value except in serving as a symbol of Christ, the Lamb of God, who shed his blood for the sins of the world. Just as the blood saved the firstborn of the Jews in Egypt, when sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of the Hebrews' homes in Egypt (Exodus 12:13), so too the blood of the Lamb of God saves the sinner from eternal damnation when applied by faith. Therefore, the cup of the New Covenant is not like the one taken in the presence of Judas Iscariot, which all Abraham's seed were entitled to drink, regardless of their character. Rather, it stands for the blood which, in a few hours, would flow from the Cross and whose virtue would benefit all true believers.

### **9.3. The Necessity of Holy Communion**

When Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me", he instructed all his true followers -- from that day until his return -- to obey his instructions and perform this holy, mysterious ordinance. In this way, the memory of his redemptive death for mankind would be kept alive

in the thoughts of all who partake of it. The future Marriage Supper of the Lamb, prepared for all believers through the merit of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, is a banquet where their cup of joy will overflow in the presence of the immaculate holiness of God (Revelation 19:6-9).

The Lord's Supper is an indication and seal of the love between believers. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 14:34). Thus, the brotherly love in faith, which one believer shares with another, makes him closer to that believer than to a natural brother who is an unbeliever.

#### 9.4. Encouragement for Peter

**"Then Jesus told them, 'This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.' Peter replied, 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.' 'I tell you the truth', Jesus answered, 'this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.' But Peter declared, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the other disciples said the same." (Matthew 26:31-35)**

When Christ told his disciples that he would soon be leaving them to go to a place where they could not follow him, Peter got excited as usual. His response was well-meant because of his warm affection, but he did not know his own weakness. Christ had to inform him that before the rooster would crow the next morning, he would deny his master three times. In order to forestall pride or reproach on the part of the others, he added that all of them would desert him that night, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah about the shepherd and sheep being parted (Zechariah 13:7). Christ had told them to love one another as he had loved them. It was a commandment which required them to defend each other. But Peter immediately violated the spirit of that command by seeking to defend himself. He even implied that it was possible for the others to fall away but not for him! By these words, he was making Christ a liar. He should have listened to the words of Solomon: "Pride goes before destruction a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18). The words of the Apostle Paul need to be heeded by all: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12). The spiritual growth of a believer does not depend on his own efforts.

**"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."**

**"Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing', they answered. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: "And he was numbered with the transgressors"; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.' The disciples said, 'See, Lord, here are two swords.' 'That is enough', he**



replied." (Luke 22:31,32; 35-38)

Because Christ knew that Peter would fall badly very soon, he wanted to encourage him to pick himself up afterward, and to warn him not to boast after he recovered. He told him that Satan had asked to sift him as wheat, but he had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. Thus, even though the Devil devises evil schemes, God can allow them to happen for purely beneficial purposes.

Peter was singled out for prayer because he needed some lessons in humility and trust. Through his failure, he learned his responsibility to his brethren when they fall; Jesus' prayer for him was answered.

Christ went on to remind his men of his care for them in the past. When he had sent them to preach, they lacked nothing. But now, the circumstances were different. On that occasion, it was for a short period and in their own land (Luke 9:1-6). Now, however, they would travel far and wide to preach among strangers. Therefore, they would need to take money with them. If necessary, they would need to sell their outer cloaks to buy swords for self-defence against robbers. Christ was saying that a Christian should use wisdom in defending himself, when the world is arrayed against him.

Jesus made it clear that he was not seeking to defend himself because his death was foretold in the Bible as inevitable. His expression, "That is enough", when the disciples told him, "Here are two swords", was used by ancient religious teachers to silence the ignorance of their students. The disciples did not understand the aim of Christ. From the account of his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, we know that he did not want them to use violence to defend him. After Peter had severed the right ear of Malchus, while seeking to protect his master from the hostile multitude, Jesus said, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

## 10. Christ In The Upper Room

After instituting The Lord's Supper, Christ addressed his disciples, and his words occupy three chapters of the Gospel according to John (14-16). He began by saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3). This is an amazing statement, coming from one who knew well that before sunset the following day the men he was addressing would be scattered, hiding from the face of his and their enemies. He himself would die on a cross between two thieves. By what right did he speak as a victor? What are we to say of his words: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6);

"If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father..." (John 14:7,9b); "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:12-14)?

He gave them his greatest promises, for their welfare would depend on him. The well-being of the Church and the success of its members in every age have also been the result of his keeping-power. He said: "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-18). Jesus repeated words regarding the relationship between loving him and keeping his commandments, and he showed the beautiful results of obedience by saying: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21). Lest his disciples should give in to despair over his departure, he added, "If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). What other explanation can one give to these words except that Christ, who was God incarnate, made these great statements with transcendent heavenly authority.

Christ is the Prince of Peace -- the one whose birth was heralded with an expression of peace and goodwill by the angels from heaven. He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Men should not say, "Peace be upon him", but rather, "Peace is from him." The apostles affirmed this in their teachings.

Jesus turned his thoughts from his disciples to the events which were about to happen in the city at midnight. He could see what his disciples could not: the crowd gathering in the house of the High Priest, preparing for the most heinous crime in history. He not only saw the treachery of the Jewish elders, their assistants, and Judas, but he also beheld his archenemy, Satan, directing them in their wicked schemes while they were unaware of his spiritual presence in their midst. He saw all that and said, "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me" (John 14:30). Satan, the prince of this world, had a hold on every prophet -- at least to some extent -- but not on the Son of Man, the perfect one who was sinless and without fault.

### 10.1. The Parable of the Vine

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already**

**clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.'" (John 15:1-4)**

By these words, Christ emphasised the strong relationship between himself and those who believe in him. He likened himself to a vine, and believers to branches. He taught that an important thing in a relationship with him is fruit, because God is glorified thereby. It is through believers that he manifests his fruit, just as a vine bears fruit through its branches. As for those branches which do not bear fruit, they are cut off and burned. The only way to be fruitful is to remain attached to him; that is, to be intimately united with him. Any separation occurring between the vine and the branch prevents fruit-bearing, dries up the branch, and causes death. But remaining in him assures the continuance of joy in every believer. It is his desire and intention that each believer should enjoy his continual companionship.

## 11. Quiz

If you have studied this book, you can answer the questions easily. Mail them to us. Please do not forget to write your full name and address clearly.

1. What are the three parables which Jesus presented in Luke 15? Why did he give these?
2. How did the prodigal son show his repentance?
3. From the Parable of the Prodigal Son, state what it is that the Creator is not slow in doing?
4. What is one lesson you have learned from the story of the elder son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son?
5. What is one lesson you have learned from the Parable of the Wicked Tenants?
6. What benefit did you receive from the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?
7. What was the prophecy of Caiaphas the High Priest regarding Jesus?
8. Mention one good thing that resulted from the raising of Lazarus from the dead?
9. Quote in full the beautiful words which Jesus spoke of children.
10. Why did Christ tell the rich young ruler that there is no one righteous except God?
11. What should you do if you want to be first?
12. How did Zacchaeus show that he had obtained salvation?
13. When Christ made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, why did he accept the people's celebrating him as king?
14. Why did Christ weep over Jerusalem?
15. What can you learn from the cursing of the barren fig tree?

16. By what authority did Christ cleanse the Temple the second time?
17. In the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, why did one of the wedding guests refuse to wear the king's robe, and what lesson can one learn from this.
18. How did Christ prove that God is the God of the living?
19. What is the greatest commandment?
20. Explain Psalm 110:1.
21. What can we learn from the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins?
22. From the words of Christ in Matthew 25:31-46, what is the mark that distinguishes sheep from goats?
23. What are two lessons you have learned from Christ washing the feet of his disciples?
24. From the words, "This is my body", how do we know that the true intent of Christ was spiritual, not literal?
25. What is the relation between a vine and its branches? How does it illustrate the relationship between believers and Christ?

If you have any questions about the Christian faith, we will be happy to answer them for you. Do not forget to write your full name and address inside the letter as well as on the envelope.

Call of Hope- P.O. Box 100827 - 70007 Stuttgart - Germany