

# CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDY

FOR  
Junior Secondary School

# 2



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**FIRST TERM NOTES ON  
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STUDIES JSS 2**

# Week 1

## Topic: The Birth of Jesus

### A. THE EARLY LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Before we talk about the early life of Jesus it is important we first talk about His birth and that of John the Baptist. Let us start with birth of John.

#### *Preparation for the Coming of Jesus*

During the time when Herod was king of Judea there was a priest named Zachariah and his wife's name is Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous but they had no child and they were old.

One day Zachariah was doing work as a priest in the temple when an angel of God appeared to him saying: "Do not be afraid Zachariah for the Lord has heard your prayer, your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. This child shall bring joy and happiness to you and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great. He is not to drink wine nor strong wine, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb. He will get the Lord's people back to Him."

Zachariah doubted the Lord's message because he and his wife were old, God made him dumb until the message came to pass.

After some days his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and after nine months gave birth to John. On the eighth day the child was to be circumcised and they were worried as to what to name the child. Some said he should be named Zachariah, but his mother said no. they made sign to his father to seek his opinion and asked for writing material and wrote: "His name is John". Immediately his mouth opened and his tongue was let loose and he spoke. He started praising God.

### MORAL LESSONS

1. Do not doubt God, He is omnipotent
2. No time is too late for God to do miracle
3. Nothing is impossible for God
4. Be righteous and believe in God
5. Do not drink alcohol, it makes you impure.
6. John was born to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ.

## **B. THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

### **Bible Passage – Luke 2:1-21**

The plan of God was to send His Son to the world. But before then he sent John the Baptist as the forerunner to prepare the earth for the coming of Christ. John was born six months earlier, it was remaining the birth of Jesus Christ the Messiah. God identified a pure and holy Virgin named Mary.

Mary was engaged to Joseph, one-day angel Gabriel appeared to her saying: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.” Mary was afraid and surprise, the angel told her not to be afraid. The angel said to her that she would be pregnant and bear a child, and His name shall be called Jesus, the Savior of the world. But Mary was surprise and asked the angel: “How could this be possible for I am still a virgin?” Luke 1:33-34. The angel answered: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of God shall overpower you and you shall be pregnant, and the child you shall bear shall be called the Son of God.” Mary submitted to the will of God and said: “I am the handmaid of God, do unto me according to your words.”

When Mary was eighth months pregnant the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus issued an order that there should be census in the whole of the Roman empire. All the Jews travelled home for head count. This made Mary and Joseph to leave Nazareth to Bethlehem. When they arrived the inns and rest houses had been occupied. Mary’s time to give birth was near so Joseph quickly took her to manger where the animals were feeding so she can give birth there. Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a Manger.

## **EVALUATION**

1. Why Zechariah was made dumb?
2. Who are the parents of John the Baptist?
3. What is the relationship between the birth of John and that of Jesus Christ



## Week 2

### Topic: Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

**Bible Passage: Luke 2:22 – 39**

#### **JESUS PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE**

**Luke 2:22 – 39**

*<sup>22</sup> When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord<sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”<sup>[a]</sup>), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”<sup>[c]</sup>*

*<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:*

*<sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss<sup>[d]</sup> your servant in peace.*

*<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,*

*<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:*

*<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people Israel.”*

*<sup>33</sup> The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.<sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,<sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*

*<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,<sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.<sup>[e]</sup> She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.<sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

*<sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.*

Eight days after birth, he was circumcised and name **Jesus Christ** as angel Gabriel had prophesied. Forty days after birth Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for presentation.

It was a rule among the Jews that the first boy child born to a family was to be taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. There his parents would make an offering to the Lord, to show that the child belonged to the Lord.

When Jesus was forty days old, Joseph and Mary brought Him to the Temple. As an offering Joseph brought a pair of young pigeons to place upon the altar of the Temple.

Living in Jerusalem at that time was a very holy man, a man whom the Lord had spoken to directly. His name was Simeon, and he was very old, but the Lord had told him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ, or Savior, whose coming had been predicted in the Bible.

One day the Spirit of the Lord urged Simeon to go to the Temple. He went, and was there when Joseph and Mary came with the baby Jesus, to present their offering. When Simeon saw the child, the Lord let him know that this was the Christ who had been promised. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and gave thanks to the Lord for letting him see the Christ:

“Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Then Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary. He also told Mary some of the things the future would hold, for her son and for her. He told her of the greatness her son would attain, but he added that sorrow, like a sword, would pierce her heart.

There was also in the Temple a woman named Anna, who spoke with God. She spent all her time praying. And the Lord also revealed to her that the baby Jesus was the Savior who had been promised. She too gave thanks to the Lord, and told the other people in the Temple that the Redeemer had come.

And so it was that a few people who kept close to God knew Jesus was the Son of God. But to the rest of the people He was merely the son of a carpenter named Joseph, who came from Nazareth.

However, there was one other man in Israel who believed that Jesus was no ordinary child. This was the cruel King Herod. When Herod learned that the three Wise Men had returned home, without bringing him word of the child they called a king, he was

furious. In his anger and fear he did a terrible thing. He gave orders to have all the children in Bethlehem, of two years old and under, killed. By doing this he felt sure he would eliminate the Christ child.

But God had already warned Joseph of Herod's cruel plans. So Joseph took Mary and the infant, and fled into Egypt, where Herod had no power. It was there the family stayed until King Herod died. After Herod's death, Joseph set out to return to Bethlehem. But upon learning that Herod's cruel son Archelaus ruled that part of Israel, Joseph decided to go back to Nazareth, where he and Mary had grown up. There, in the land of Galilee, Jesus grew to manhood, working with His father as a carpenter.

The importance of the presentation was to fulfill the law of Moses regarding the first born of man and animal. The first born of every Jewish parents or animal belongs to God, the giver of all things.

### ***Significance of Prophecies of Simeon and Anna***

1. According to Simeon it is not everyone that will accept the salvation Jesus brings, some will stumble and fall because of Him.
2. Their prophecies made it clear that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament about the coming of Messiah.
3. Simeon's prophetic words known as *nun dimittis* (song of Simeon) shows that Jesus is the universal savior.
4. Anna's prophecy about Jesus attracted the attention of all present to the uniqueness of the child Jesus. Through her words people in the temple knew that Jesus was not an ordinary child.
5. Anna's work for God in the temple in her old age shows that there is work waiting the righteous church worker and that the work can have influence on generations to come.
6. Anna found favour in the sight of God because she was righteous and works for Him, because of that God revealed to her the coming and humanity of the expected Messiah.
7. The birth, ministry and destiny of Jesus was celebrated by the pious and righteous Jews.

### **MORAL LESSONS**

1. It is good and an honourable to yourself and parent to remain a virgin until you are married.

2. It is good to obey God's words and submit to His will like Mary did.
3. Jesus was born where animals stay and feed, it doesn't matter the poor background someone comes from, and anybody can be great. Greatness is not by family wealth and affluence. Your background should not determine your future
4. Nothing is impossible before God.

## **EVALUATION**

1. Why was Mary chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ?
2. Where was Jesus born?
3. Why is it important to remain a virgin until marriage?

# Week 3

## Topic: Jesus Baptism

**Bible Passage – Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11**

### **The Baptism of Jesus Christ**

Immediately after the message of John where he told the crowd that the one coming after him was greater than him, Jesus voluntarily came forward to John to be baptised. This shows that Jesus is not a proud and egotistic person who came not to be a political conqueror but the Messiah. John was an ordinary man while Jesus is God but He went to John for baptism. This shows that Jesus is law-abiding, humble and leads by example. As Jesus was coming out of the water the sky opened and Spirit of God descended in form of a dove and a voice was heard saying: “This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

At first glance, it seems that Jesus’ baptism has no purpose at all. John’s baptism was the baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:11), but Jesus was sinless and had no need of repentance. Even John was taken aback at Jesus’ coming to him. John recognized his own sin and was aware that he, a sinful man in need of repentance himself, was unfit to baptize the spotless Lamb of God: “I need to be baptized by You and You are coming to me?” (Matthew 3:14). Jesus replied that it should be done because “it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

There are several reasons why it was fitting for John to baptize Jesus at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Jesus was about to embark on His great work, and it was appropriate that He be recognized publicly by His forerunner. John was the “voice crying in the wilderness” prophesied by Isaiah, calling people to repentance in preparation for their Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). By baptizing Him, John was declaring to all that here was the One they had been waiting for, the Son of God, the One he had predicted would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus’ baptism by John takes on an added dimension when we consider that John was of the tribe of Levi and a direct descendant of Aaron. Luke specifies that both of John’s parents were of the Aaronic priestly line (Luke 1:5). One of the duties of the priests in the Old Testament was to present the sacrifices before the Lord. John the Baptist’s baptism of Jesus could be seen as a priestly presentation of the Ultimate Sacrifice. John’s words the day after the baptism have a decidedly priestly air: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Jesus’ baptism also showed that He identified with sinners. His baptism symbolized the sinners’ baptism into the righteousness of Christ, dying with Him and rising free

from sin and able to walk in the newness of life. His perfect righteousness would fulfill all the requirements of the Law for sinners who could never hope to do so on their own. When John hesitated to baptize the sinless Son of God, Jesus replied that it was proper to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). By this He alluded to the righteousness that He provides to all who come to Him to exchange their sin for His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In addition, Jesus’ coming to John showed His approval of John’s baptism, bearing witness to it, that it was from heaven and approved by God. This would be important in the future when others would begin to doubt John’s authority, particularly after his arrest by Herod (Matthew 14:3-11). After baptism Jesus started His ministry of healing the sick, preaching etc. Jesus was 30 years old when He was baptised.

### **Significance of Baptism**

1. Baptism was instituted to prepare people to become members of community and family of Jesus
2. The baptism of John was open to all
3. The baptism of John was baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins.
4. It is mandatory for all Christians to be baptised.
5. Baptism is the physical declaration that the process of change has started from the inside
6. Even though Jesus had no sin to confess he still baptized to fulfill all righteousness and to identify with sinners.

### **EVALUATION**

1. Why was Jesus baptized?
2. At what age was Jesus baptized?
3. What are the significance of baptism?

## Week 4

### Topic: The Temptation of Jesus Christ

#### Bible Passage – Matthew 1:4-11

#### Bible Passage

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’<sup>[e]</sup>”

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

#### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Temptation is the urge to do that evil you aren’t supposed to do. The temptation of Jesus happened immediately after His baptism. Immediately after His baptism Jesus went to the wilderness to pray for forty days and forty nights. In the wilderness the devil came to Jesus and said: “If you are the Son of God turn this stone to bread”. Though Jesus was hungry because He was fasting, He replied devil thus: “It is written,

man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”

The devil then led Jesus to the top of the temple and told Him to jump down, that God would send His angels to catch Him. But Jesus said “you shall not tempt the Lord your God”. This temptation was to test the ego and pride of Jesus. If He was proud He would have jumped to showcase His power. But Jesus was humble. The devil again led Jesus to the mountain top and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give them to Him if only He would bow down and worship him, but Jesus said to him: “Be gone, Satan! It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him alone shall you serve”. After three attempts without the devil succeeding, he shamefully left Jesus.

Jesus’ temptations follow three patterns that are common to all men. The first temptation concerns the lust of the flesh (Matthew 4:3–4). Our Lord is hungry, and the devil tempts Him to convert stones into bread, but He replies with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. The second temptation concerns the pride of life (Matthew 4:5–7), and here the devil uses a verse of Scripture (Psalm 91:11–12), but the Lord replies again with Scripture to the contrary (Deuteronomy 6:16), stating that it is wrong for Him to abuse His own powers. The third temptation concerns the lust of the eyes (Matthew 4:8–10), and if any quick route to the Messiah ship could be attained, bypassing the passion and crucifixion for which He had originally come, this was the way. The devil already had control over the kingdoms of the world (Ephesians 2:2) but was now ready to give everything to Christ in return for His allegiance. But the mere thought almost causes the Lord’s divine nature to shudder at such a concept and He replies sharply, “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only” (Deuteronomy 6:13).

### **Significance of the Temptation**

1. The temptation of Jesus prepared Him for His ministry
2. Jesus was tempted all through His ministry but He didn’t succumb
3. Jesus used the scriptures to defeat the devil

### **Temptations in Our World Today**

If Jesus could be tempted that means as Christians we should be prepared to face more temptations than Jesus faced. There are different types of temptations common in Nigeria.

1. Lying in order to escape punishment
2. Being Jealous of what your friends have that you don’t have



3. Following bad friends who make you do things that are immoral and sinful
4. Disobey, abuse or fight parents and teachers
5. Cheat during class tests and examinations
6. Temptation to engage in premarital sex

### **Ways of Overcoming Temptations**

1. Make Jesus your role model
2. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Obey God's words
3. Be prayerful
4. Avoid bad friends
5. If you are tempted to do evil, leave that place immediately, don't stay there
6. Fill your mind with good things so that your thoughts will be pure
7. Abstain from things that breeds sin

### **Moral Lessons**

1. We need to be full of the holy spirit – The Holy Spirit is the power of God. It is given to us upon baptism
2. Fasting is an important spiritual tool for the growth of any Christian
3. Satan is always ready to take advantage of our human weaknesses – It is important for us to surrender our weaknesses to God
4. We need to keep our spiritual sword sharp. We need to eat spiritual food daily ie the word of God through dail study and meditation
5. Satan perverts the truth – One of the most common strategies of Satan to deceive people is to pervert the truth
6. We must not tempt God
7. We must only worship God

### **EVALUATION**

1. What did Jesus use in defeating the devil?
2. What other lessons can be learnt from this story?

3. Is the devil a god in this world? If yes How?
4. List other temptations you have faced as a Christian

**Answers**

2. The devil uses the things around us to tempt, we must be careful of friends and the things we surround ourselves with. The devil also uses our thoughts to control us, it is therefore important for us to think on things that are good and pure.

3. The devil is a god in this world because he controls virtually all the things humans do. The world is full of sin and all sorts of evil things and we know that the Devil is the author of all immoral and sinful nature of man.

# **Week 5**

## **Topic: Call for Disciples**

**Text: Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20, Luke 5:1-11, Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 8:18-22**

### **JESUS CALLS THE FIRST FOUR DISCIPLES**

Jesus was passing beside the Sea of Galilee when He saw Peter and His brother Andrew who were fishermen fishing on the sea at that time. Jesus told the brothers to follow Him that He would make them fishers of men. They immediately left what they were doing and followed Him.

Close by, Jesus saw James and John, sons of Zebedee also fisher men, He asked them to follow Him, they immediately left the net they were mending, left their father and followed Jesus. Later the multitude gathered and Jesus entered Peter's boat and asked him to pull the boat a bit into the sea. There He preached to the crowd. After the preaching He asked Simon (Peter) to cast his net on the sea but Peter replied: "Master we toiled all night but nothing, but at your word I will let down the net." Then Peter's net caught so many fishes that he couldn't lift it alone. He solicited for the help of other fishermen. The weight of the catch nearly sank the boat. All were marveled. Peter fell down on his knees to Jesus saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". Jesus replied: "Do not be afraid, from now on, you shall be catching men."

**Note, the first four disciples are: Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John.**

### **2. JESUS CALLS THE TWELVE DISCIPLES**

In Galilee after performing some miracles Jesus chose some, out of whom He selected the twelve disciples to preach the gospel and perform miracles too. The twelve disciples are:

- 1. Simon Peter**
- 2. James (son of Zebedee)**
- 3. John (son of Zebedee)**
- 4. Andrew**
- 5. Thomas**
- 6. Philip**

7. **Bartholomew**
8. **Matthew**
9. **James the son Alpheus**
10. **Thaddeus**
11. **Simon the Canaanite**
12. **Judas Iscariot**

### **The Demand for Discipleship**

Jesus requires some qualities from anyone that wants to be His disciple. The qualities are: obedience, humility, availability, faithfulness, teachable, self-denial, total commitment and dedication, passion for God, ability to persevere.

Call for discipleship is not a party call. Some people longed to be among Jesus disciples but because they did not have the qualities Jesus refused.

### **MORAL LESSONS**

1. The four disciples left everything and followed Jesus Christ. So Christians of today should learn to forsake earthly possession if it is a hindrance to doing God's work and making heaven.
2. In our churches today God can call us
3. Poor education, poverty should not be seen as hindrance again because Jesus chose His disciples for the class of the poor.
4. Always learn to trust God and obey Him as Peter did by throwing the net at Jesus commanded.
5. People should devote their wealth, time and energy to the service of God.

### **ASSESSMENT**

1. What are the qualities of discipleship?
2. Mention the name of the 12 disciples

## Week 6

### Topic: Jesus Meets Sinners

**Text: Luke 19:1-10**

#### **Zacchaeus the Tax Collector – Luke 19:1-10**

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.<sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.<sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.<sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”<sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

<sup>8</sup> 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.”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

#### **Jesus and Zacchaeus**

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing, a man called Zacchaeus was eager to see Him. Zacchaeus was a short man, a tax collector and very wealthy. He used to extort (cheat) money from people. He saw that Jesus was passing through he ran ahead and climbed a Sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus. The crowd was much and because of his shortness he wouldn't have been able to see Jesus. When Jesus reached the tree, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus: “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must be in your house today.” He came down at once and welcomed Jesus gladly. The people present there started murmuring, “Imagine, he has gone to be the guest of a sinner”.

Zacchaeus told Jesus: “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 then said to him: “Today, salvation has come to this house, for the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost”.

## **Jesus Calls Matthew**

Matthew was also a tax collector like Zacchaeus. He was sitting in tax collectors' office when Jesus was passing and told him "follow me". Immediately Matthew followed Jesus.

When Jesus was having dinner in Matthew's house with other tax collectors, the Pharisees started asking His disciples "why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus heard this and said "it is not the healthy who needs a doctor but the sick. For I have come to call the sinners not the righteous."

## **MORAL LESSONS**

1. Never condemn a sinner because he/she could repent and be used by God to do wonderful things. Matthew later became a disciple of Jesus Christ and wrote the book of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament.
2. Jesus is always ready to welcome sinners who are ready to repent.
3. Zacchaeus was willing to see Jesus, and Jesus made Himself available for him. Jesus is always ready to welcome sinners to his fold just as the story of the prodigal son
4. There is hope for every sinner if they turn away from their sins
5. Jesus is always ready to welcome a repentant heart
6. Salvation is always available to anyone that seek it.

## **EVALUATION**

1. Why were the Pharisees murmuring when Jesus went to Zacchaeus' and Matthew's house?

## Week 7

### Topic: Christian as light and salt of the world

#### Outline:

- **Matt. 5: 13 – 15**

“What does it mean that believers are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16)?”

Jesus used the concepts of salt and light a number of different times to refer to the role of His followers in the world. One example is found in Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” Salt had two purposes in the Middle East of the first century. Because of the lack of refrigeration, salt was used to preserve food, especially meat which would quickly spoil in the desert environment. Believers in Christ are preservatives to the world, preserving it from the evil inherent in the society of ungodly men whose unredeemed natures are corrupted by sin (Psalm 14:3; Romans 8:8).

Second, salt was used then, as now, as a flavor enhancer. In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of the food it seasons, the followers of Christ stand out as those who “enhance” the flavor of life in this world. Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt has a positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Where there is strife, we are to be peacemakers; where there is sorrow, we are to be the ministers of Christ, binding up wounds, and where there is hatred, we are to exemplify the love of God in Christ, returning good for evil (Luke 6:35).

In the analogy of light to the world, the good works of Christ’s followers are to shine for all to see. The following verses in Matthew 5 highlight this truth: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16, NASB). The idea here is similar—the presence of light in darkness is something which is unmistakable. The presence of Christians in the world must be like a light in the darkness, not only in the sense that the truth of God’s Word brings light to the darkened hearts of sinful man (John 1:1-10), but also in the sense that our good deeds must be evident for all to see. And indeed, our deeds will be evident if they are performed in accordance with the other principles which Jesus mentions in this passage, such as the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-11. Notice especially that the concern is not that Christians

would stand out for their own sake, but that those who looked on might “glorify your Father who is in heaven” (v. 16, KJV).

In view of these verses, what sorts of things can hinder or prevent the Christian from fulfilling his or her role as salt and light in the world? The passage clearly states that the difference between the Christian and the world must be preserved; therefore, any choice on our part which blurs the distinction between us and the rest of the world is a step in the wrong direction. This can happen either through a choice to accept the ways of the world for the sake of comfort or convenience or to contravene the law of obedience to Christ.

Mark 9:50 suggests that saltiness can be lost specifically through a lack of peace with one another; this follows from the command to “have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” And in Luke 14:34–35, we find a reference to the metaphor of salt once again, this time in the context of obedient discipleship to Jesus Christ. The loss of saltiness occurs in the failure of the Christian to daily take up the cross and follow Christ wholeheartedly.

It seems, then, that the role of the Christian as salt and light in the world may be hindered or prevented through any choice to compromise or settle for that which is more convenient or comfortable, rather than that which is truly best and pleasing to the Lord. Moreover, the status of salt and light is something which follows naturally from the Christian’s humble obedience to the commandments of Christ. It is when we depart from the Spirit-led lifestyle of genuine discipleship that the distinctions between ourselves and the rest of the world become blurred and our testimony is hindered. Only by remaining focused on Christ and being obedient to Him can we expect to remain salt and light in the world.

### **Assessment.**

1. Mention the two purposes of salt in the middle east of the 21st century.
2. What can hinder the role of the Christian as salt and light in the world?



# Week 8

## Topic: Worldly Possession

**Text: Matthew 16:26, Luke 16:11**

### **Matthew 16:26**

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

### **Luke 16:11**

<sup>11</sup> So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

### **THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL**

The parable of the rich fool is found in the book of Luke 12:13–21. Jesus warned His listeners that life is not just about gathering wealth; life is so much more than abundance of possessions. Being wealthy is not just the ultimate but using the wealth to bless others and further the work of God. The man in the parable, referred to as the rich fool is interested in increasing and accumulating more wealth. The parable teaches that we shouldn't accumulate wealth on earth and leave to accumulate wealth in heaven. We gather treasure in heaven when we help the poor, promote the gospel and work of God. We shouldn't put all our attention and energy in earthly possession, by the way they are all vanity.

*Matthew 19:16, 21-22 – “And behold, a man came up to Him (Jesus), saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow Me.’ When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

This man could not give up his wealth. He was in a state of self-worship. He allowed his greed to over-trump the calling that Jesus had given him. He put his wealth at a higher importance than Jesus. Be careful!

The key to all of this is very simple. It is about your heart. Do you live for your wealth, or do you live to use it for the glory of God? If Jesus came to you today and said, “I

have great plans for you. Come, sell everything you have and follow Me” would you be able to part ways with your things? This is your test to see if you make money/possessions an idol or not. Is it a blessing to you or a curse

Earthly wealth will be left behind when we die, but heavenly wealth stays forever. Jesus wants us not to waste our time on material things and forgetting the good heavenly things. Not that being wealthy is bad, but we shouldn’t worship our wealth.

## **MORAL LESSONS**

1. Earthly possession is vanity, we should always work to make heaven
2. Being rich is not bad, trying to be rich is not a sin, but don’t put the material things ahead of God. God should come first in everything we do.
3. What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lost his soul?

Materialism is defined as “the preoccupation with material things rather than intellectual or spiritual things.” If a Christian is preoccupied with material things, it is definitely wrong. That is not to say we cannot have material things, but the obsession with acquiring and caring for “stuff” is a dangerous thing for the Christian, for two reasons.

First, any preoccupation, obsession or fascination with anything other than God is sinful and is displeasing to God. We are to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5), which is, according to Jesus, the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37–38). Therefore, God is the only thing we can (and should) occupy ourselves with habitually. He alone is worthy of our complete attention, love and service. To offer these things to anything, or anyone, else is idolatry.

Second, when we concern ourselves with the material world, we are easily drawn in by the “deceitfulness of wealth” (Mark 4:19), thinking that we will be happy or fulfilled or content if only we had more of whatever it is we are chasing. This is a lie from the father of lies, Satan. He wants us to be chasing after something he knows will never satisfy us so we will be kept from pursuing that which is the only thing that can satisfy—God Himself. Luke 16:13 tells us we “cannot serve both God and money.” We must seek to be content with what we have, and materialism is the exact opposite of that contentment. It causes us to strive for more and more and more, all the while telling us that this will be the answer to all our needs and dreams. The Bible tells us that a person’s “life is not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15) and that we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

**Assessment.**

1. What is Materialism?
2. What did the parable teach us?

## Week 9

### Topic: The Beatitudes

#### Outline:

- Matt 5:1 – 12

#### Meaning of Beatitudes:

The **Beatitudes** are eight blessings recounted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. Each is a proverb-like proclamation, without narrative. Four of the blessings also appear in the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke, followed by four woes which mirror the blessings.

In the Vulgate, each of these blessings begins with the word *beati*, which translates to “happiness” or “blessedness,” such that “blessed are the poor in spirit” appears in Latin as “*beati pauperes spiritu*”. The Latin noun *beātītūdō* was coined by Cicero to describe a state of blessedness, and was later incorporated within the chapter headings written for Matthew 5 in various printed versions of the Vulgate. Subsequently, the word was anglicized to *beatitudes* in the Great Bible of 1540, and has over time, taken on a preferred spelling of *beatitudes*.

Each Beatitude consists of two phrases: the condition and the result. In almost every case the condition is from familiar Old Testament context, but Jesus teaches a new interpretation. Together, the Beatitudes present a new set of Christian ideals that focus on a spirit of love and humility different in orientation than the usual force and exaction taken. They echo the ideals of the teachings of Jesus on mercy, spirituality, and compassion.

#### THE EIGHT BEATITUDES OF JESUS

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessed are they who mourn,  
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart,  
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Gospel of St. **Matthew** 5:3-10

**Assessment.**

1. Explain the Beatitudes
2. Mention the 8 beatitudes of Jesus

## Week 10

### Topic: Christian as Salt and Light of the World

**Text: Matthew 5:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

<sup>14</sup> *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.<sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Jesus used the concepts of salt and light a number of different times to refer to the role of His followers in the world. One example is found in Matthew 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." Salt had two purposes in the Middle East of the first century. Because of the lack of refrigeration, salt was used to preserve food, especially meat which would quickly spoil in the desert environment. Believers in Christ are preservatives to the world, preserving it from the evil inherent in the society of ungodly men whose unredeemed natures are corrupted by sin (Psalm 14:3; Romans 8:8).

Second, salt was used then, as now, as a flavor enhancer. In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of the food it seasons, the followers of Christ stand out as those who "enhance" the flavor of life in this world. Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt has a positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Where there is strife, we are to be peacemakers; where there is sorrow, we are to be the ministers of Christ, binding up wounds, and where there is hatred, we are to exemplify the love of God in Christ, returning good for evil (Luke 6:35).

In the analogy of light to the world, the good works of Christ's followers are to shine for all to see. The following verses in Matthew 5 highlight this truth: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, NASB). The idea here is similar—the presence of light in darkness is something which is unmistakable. The presence of Christians in the world must be like a light in the darkness, not only

in the sense that the truth of God's Word brings light to the darkened hearts of sinful man (John 1:1-10), but also in the sense that our good deeds must be evident for all to see. And indeed, our deeds will be evident if they are performed in accordance with the other principles which Jesus mentions in this passage, such as the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-11. Notice especially that the concern is not that Christians would stand out for their own sake, but that those who looked on might "glorify your Father who is in heaven" (v. 16, KJV).

### **As Salt**

The value of salt, especially in the ancient world can not be under estimated. Roman soldiers received their wages in salt. The Greeks considered salt to be divine. The Mosaic Law required that all offerings presented by the Israelites contain salt. (Lev. 2:13) When Jesus told his disciples that they were "the salt of the earth", as recorded in Matthew 5:13, they understood the metaphor. While the universal importance of salt is not as readily apparent in our modern world, the mandate that Jesus gave to his first disciples is still relevant and applicable to His followers today.

What are the characteristics of salt that caused the Lord to use it in this context? Theologians have different theories about the meaning of "salt" in Matthew 5:13. Some think that its whiteness represents the purity of the justified believer. Others say that salt's flavoring properties imply that Christians are to add divine flavor to the world. Still others believe that Christians are to sting the world with rebuke and judgment the way salt stings an open wound. Another group asserts that, as salt, Christians are to create a thirst for Christ. Salt, however, has another vital purpose which is probably what the Lord had in mind—it stops decay. When Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth", He meant that all of His disciples were to serve as preservatives, stopping the moral decay in our sin infected world.

### **As Light**

In Matthew 5:14, Jesus tells His disciples, "You are the light of the world". As "salt", the Christian is to counteract the power of sin. As "light" we are to illuminate or make visible. Our lives are to be an on-going witness to the reality of Christ's presence in our lives. When we worship God with pure hearts, when we love others as ourselves, and when we do good without growing weary, we are lights shining. It is important, however to know that it is not our light, but the reflection of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ Himself, that people will see in us.

In Philippians 2:15, the apostle Paul says, "Believers, you are to shine as light in the world". The Greek word used here is very similar to the word for the beacon that a lighthouse emits. That beacon is bright and unmistakable in its purpose. It warns of

danger. It directs to safe harbor. It provides hope for those who have lost hope. Every day we are surrounded by people groping around in the darkness, separated from the God who loves them. God uses His children, like beacons from a lighthouse, to show the way to Him.

**Assessment.**

1. What are the different theories theologians have about the meaning of salt?



# **SECOND TERM NOTES CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

# Week 1

## Topic: Jesus' Parables

### PARABLE

Parable is a short, simple story that teaches a moral or religious lesson. A **parable** is a succinct, didactic story, in prose or verse that illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles. It differs from a fable in that fables employ animals, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature as characters, whereas **parables** have human characters. A **parable** is a type of analogy. In religion it is an earthly story with spiritual and moral lessons tasking man to cultivate godly behaviors in life. A parable is, literally, something “cast alongside” something else. Jesus’ parables were stories that were “cast alongside” a truth in order to illustrate that truth. His parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

For a time in His ministry, Jesus relied heavily on parables. He told many of them; in fact, according to Mark 4:34a, “He did not say anything to them without using a parable.” There are about 35 of Jesus’ parables recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.

It had not always been that way. In the early part of His ministry, Jesus had not used parables. Suddenly, He begins telling parables exclusively, much to the surprise of His disciples, who asked Him, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” (Matthew 13:10).

### Why Jesus Taught in Parables

1. The society Jesus found Himself used parables as a means of passing wisdom and history.
2. The people like stories that is why they found parables interesting. It is easier to remember.
3. He taught in parable in order to catch the attention of the society
4. He used parables to teach His disciples the secrets of the kingdom of God hidden from other classes of people.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST			
PARABLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
The Lamp	5:14-16	4:21-25	8:16-18
The Speck and The Log	7:1-5		6:37-42
New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16-17	2:21-22	5:36-39
The Divided Kingdom	12:24-30	3:23-27	11:14-23
The Sower	13:1-23	4:1-20	8:4-15
The Growing Seed		4:26-29	
The Good Samaritan			10:29-37
The Friend at Midnight			11:5-13
The Rich Fool			12:13-21
The Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
The Weeds Among the Wheat	13:24-30		
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-34	13:18-19
The Leaven	13:33-34		13:20-21
Hidden Treasure	13:44		
Pearl of Great Price	13:45-46		
The Net	13:47-50		
The Invited Guests			14:7-14
The Heart of Man	15:10-20	7:14-23	
The Lost Sheep	18:10-14		15:1-7
The Lost Coin			15:8-10
The Prodigal Son			15:11-32
The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
The Persistent Widow			18:1-8
The Pharisee and The Tax Collector			18:9-14
The Unforgiving Servant	18:23-35		
Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
The Two Sons	21:28-32		
The Tenant Farmers	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
Marriage Feast or Great Banquet	22:1-14		14:15-24
The Budding Fig Tree	24:32-35	13:28-33	21:29-33
The Faithful vs. The Wicked Servant	24:45-51	13:34-37	12:35-48
The Ten Virgins	25:1-13		
Ten Talents or Gold Coins	25:14-30		19:11-27

### Parable of the Lost Sheep

One-day tax collectors and sinners gathered round Jesus to listen to Him. The Pharisees and scribes were sad. They started murmuring why Jesus was receiving sinners and even eating with them. Jesus heard this and told them the parable of the lost sheep.

He wondered what man of their status, having one hundred sheep, if he happened to have lost one of them would not leave the remaining ninety-nine in the wilderness and go out in search of the one that was missing until he found it. And he had found it; he would carry it on his shoulders rejoicing. And he had reached home he would call his friends and say to them: "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost". Jesus concluded by telling them that in the same manner there would be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who needs no repentance.

### **MORAL LESSONS**

1. This also means that God really wants us to repent and turn to Him.
2. The kingdom of God is always open to welcome repentant sinners.
3. Do not discriminate and condemn sinners
4. Don't judge other people
5. If you are an addicted sinner Jesus is looking for you, make yourself available by repenting from your sins

### **EVALUATION**

1. Define parable
2. Mention the reasons Jesus used parables to pass His message
3. What have learnt from the parable of the lost sheep?

## Week 2

### Topic: The Parables of the Kingdom

#### Parable of the Sower – Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.<sup>2</sup> Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.<sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.<sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.<sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.<sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.<sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.<sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.<sup>9</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear.”*

*<sup>10</sup> The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”*

*<sup>11</sup> He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.<sup>12</sup> Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.<sup>13</sup> This is why I speak to them in parables:*

*“Though seeing, they do not see;  
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

*<sup>14</sup> In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*

*<sup>15</sup> For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.’*

*<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.<sup>17</sup> For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.*

<sup>18</sup> *"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup> The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

After a sower sowed seeds, some seeds fell along the path and the birds ate them. Some fell on rocky ground and they died immediately they sprang up because there was no soil for the roots to grow downwards and withstand the heat of the sun. some seeds fell among thorns and they were choked to death. Some seeds however, fell on good soil and grew and flourished to bring forth more grains, some hundred, some 60, some 30.

Interpreting it Jesus explained that the he is the sower, while the seeds are his words, the soil is the hearts and minds of people who hear the word of God.

***The seeds that fell on the path and devoured by the birds.*** These are people who hear but don't understand the word of God because evil ones come and snatch the sown words through lack of interest, lack of attention and concentration. This is the 'in one ear, out the other' crowd. Picture a middle-eastern road hardened by years of travel by men and animals. What happens to the seed when it falls here? It sits out in the open for the birds to come and eat it. Have you ever been like that? Sat in a sermon or Bible study yawning, nodding off, thinking about something else, not caring enough to pay attention? If you don't take God's Word seriously, you don't even represent soil at all – you're like a concrete sidewalk. The devil is happy to take God's word away and plant all kinds of new thoughts in your mind. And what's then end result? I like how it's phrased in the New Living Testament: "the devil takes the message from their hearts, prevents them from believing and from being saved." Not a pretty outcome.

***The seeds that fell on rocky ground:*** Refer to the people who hear the word of God, receive it with joy and great excitement, but their joy is not deep-rooted in their heart. As a result the message does not last long in them. Such people will backslide once tribulations and persecution set in. These people stayed awake. They were happy to receive the Word of God and even understand it to some extent, but when they're tested, they collapse. They give in to temptation. They have no real roots.

They're just not planted deep enough in the soil. They know God's word, but it hasn't truly become their foundation. It's a superficial faith that springs up when times are good. But when the heat comes, just like the sun on a hot day, the small seedling that shot up on the rock will wither and die for lack of soil and water. We're all faced with temptations: women, lust, money, gossip, hateful thoughts and not just some temptations to do the wrong thing, but to not obey God's commands and to not do the right thing, to ignore a person who could use your help. This is what Jesus is talking about here – a superficial faith for Sundays, for Bible studies, for when things are going well, but that all too easily gives in to temptation and fails when the going gets rough.

***The sowed seeds that fell among thorns:*** Refers to those who hear the word of God but their love and attachment to material things of this world cause their heart to be choked and the knocked out from them. They hear the word, but do nothing with it. They know the word, but don't truly accept it. They teach it, but don't practice it. They let themselves get overwhelmed by the worries and problems of life. They don't grow in maturity. If we're not earnestly seeking the Word of God, it leads to indifference about devotions, about the church, about the Bible, and our relationship with Jesus. So what happens then? The source for our satisfaction comes from external things (the thorns): riches, pleasures, good times with the old crowd, getting a buzz, whooping it up. Even though the seed was planted in good soil, the thorns choked it, just like these things can choke us from depending on God. Again, you're not alone if you've ever felt like this or fallen into this trap. It's all around us. It's the real world. Who doesn't like a good party? Who doesn't want a piece of eye candy clinging to them? And conversely, who doesn't occasionally get overwhelmed by the worries of life? What's one of the major problems in today's society? Yep, depression. Feelings of guilt and worthlessness. Feelings of hopelessness. Always feeling sad or anxious. Restlessness. Being irritable. Let these things grab you and they can easily overwhelm those seeds of God's Word that will never be able to grow to maturity.

***The seeds that fell on good soil:*** Refers to people who hear the word of God and understand it. They go on to obey the word– by being doers and hearers of the word. They end up bearing beautiful fruits in the kingdom of God. . . . and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. It may seem like funny math and bad business, but God knew what he was doing when he sent Christ to scatter the seed everywhere. There'll be times in your life when you feel like you're firmly planted in the good soil. Use this opportunity to share God's Word with others. That's when you become the sower! When Jesus speaks of a huge harvest, 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown he's not talking about just the seeds that he planted. He planted some seeds 2,000 years ago. Those couple of hundred have grown to something like two billion Christians today. And Jesus is saying, he wants this to continue. He wants each of you sitting here today to be a sower of seeds. Yes, some will fall on concrete, some on rocky soil, and some with the weeds. But some will fall on fertile soil. But

remember, the fruit of sharing the Gospel doesn't just happen on its own. It takes a humble heart and meditation on the Word of God to produce a good harvest and to further the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us that the farmer scattered seed (the Word of God) on all types of ground. He didn't say that the farmer was meticulously planting the seeds in designated 'good soil' areas in nice neat rows – Jesus says he was scattering the seed everywhere. Doesn't that seem wasteful though? I mean, if I were planting a field, why would I throw seed on rocks, thorns, and the side of the road? Wouldn't you want to be careful and put the seed in only the good soil right from the beginning? Actually, this method of planting wasn't so strange back in Biblical times because the custom of planting was to first scatter the seed and then plow it into the soil. But to help us understand the parable, we should remember what Jesus said earlier in Luke 5:31 – "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." In this statement Christ makes it clear that he came to rescue sinners. His purpose was to bring salvation to everyone. If we keep this in mind, we can see that the parable actually has three meanings:

- 1) To show that Christ came to share the Word of God with everyone. We don't serve a stingy God who picks and chooses who is good enough to hear the word. He graciously sows into everyone who is willing to accept his word.
- 2) To show us how the different soils in our life can encourage us—or stop us from receiving the Word of God, the "Good News."
- 3) To encourage us to share the Word of God with others. And like Jesus, we should spread the Good News with everyone, not just those who are receptive.

#### Parable of the Wheat and Tares Matthew 13:24-30

<sup>24</sup> *Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

<sup>27</sup> *"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'*

<sup>28</sup> *"An enemy did this," he replied.*

*"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'*

<sup>29</sup> *"No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"*



Note: this is the first in a series of eight “Kingdom of Heaven” parables and the only one explained by Jesus. After telling this, he expects you to “get it.”

#### Matthew 13:24-30

The parable of the wheat and the weeds, or tares, follows the parable of the sower and four types of soils found in all three synoptic gospels, but this one is only in Matthew. It seems to enlarge upon the seeds in the previous parable that fell among the thorns and brambles which grew up and choked the plants. But this is different. In the previous parable, Jesus said the thorns represented the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth. In this parable, worldly worries and deceitfulness may be some of the characteristics of the weeds, but primarily the weeds or tares represent unbelievers and what Jesus calls “sons of the devil.” As you delve into the parable, you find it filled with spiritual significance and truth. But, in spite of the clear explanation of the parable that Jesus gave (Matthew 13:36-43), this parable is very often misinterpreted. This misinterpretation is not new; it’s been misunderstood for centuries. Another important point: when Jesus speaks of “the kingdom of heaven,” he is speaking of it in the world today, not as a distant destination where we go after the final judgement. This can be a somewhat puzzling concept. We have Bible verses that say the kingdom of heaven is already with us, but others say it is coming at the end of the age. Here’s an example of each: • Luke 17:21 – Nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” • Matthew 7:21 – Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. In Luke, the Pharisees had asked when God’s kingdom would come not realizing it had already arrived. The kingdom of God (or of heaven) is not like an earthly kingdom with geographical boundaries. Instead, it begins with the work of God’s spirit in people’s lives and in relationships. So the kingdom of God is a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in his eternal life. We join the kingdom when we trust in Christ as our savior—that’s why it is here now and will continue into the eternal future.

Back to the original parable. In the agricultural society of Christ’s time, many farmers depended on the quality of their crops. An enemy sowing weeds would have sabotaged a business. The tares in the parable were likely dandelion because that weed, until fully mature, looks the same as wheat. Without modern weed killers, what would a wise farmer do in such a dilemma? Instead of tearing out the wheat with the tares, the landowner in this parable wisely waited until the harvest. After harvesting the whole field, the tares—or dandelion—could be separated and burned. The wheat would be sold or saved in the barn.

In the explanation of parable, Christ declares that He Himself is the sower. He spreads His redeemed seed, true believers, in the field of the world. Through His grace, these Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23 lists love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). Their

presence on earth is the reason the “kingdom of heaven” is like the field of the world. When Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17; Mark 3:2), he meant the spiritual realm which exists on earth side by side with the realm of the evil one (1 John 5:19). When the kingdom of heaven comes to its final fruition, heaven will be a reality and there will be no “weeds” among the “wheat.” But for now, both good and bad seeds mature in the world. The enemy in the parable is Satan. In opposition to Jesus Christ, the devil tries to destroy Christ’s work by placing false believers and teachers in the world who lead many people astray. Tares, especially in the early stages of growth, resemble wheat. Likewise, a false believer may resemble a true believer. In Matthew 7:22, Jesus warned that many profess faith but do not know Him. Thus, each person should examine his own relationship with Christ. Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 13:5) – Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

## **ASSESSMENT**

1. Why do people dislike weeds?
2. In this parable, who is the sower? What does the field represent? The wheat? The weeds? The enemy? The harvest? The harvesters?
3. What did the servants volunteer to do for the owner of the field? (Vs 13:28)
4. On what grounds did the owner turn down the servants’ suggestion? (Vs 13:29) How difficult is it to pull up only the weeds from a densely growing bed of flowers, Pachysandra, or even just grass? Can you always clearly identify the weeds from the good plants?
5. What dangers lie in trying to label people as either “weeds” or wheat?”
6. Whose responsibility is it to identify the weeds and deal with them?
7. What does this parable teach about church purity? Divine patience? Human accountability?
8. If you had to guess, what would you say would be the ratio of “wheat” to “weeds” in Morristown (or your home town)?
9. How do these kinds of passages (threats of judgement and harsh punishment for unbelievers) make you feel?
10. In what ways can you “shine like the sun” in your contacts with unbelievers? What does this mean? (Daniel 12:3) What does this say about Christians who try to isolate themselves from non-Christians?

11. It is possible to interpret this parable to mean that whatever you were at birth (weed or wheat) is what you remain to the “end of the age.” What do you think about that?

12. What does this parable teach us about the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God)?

### **Week 3**

#### **Topic: PARABLES ILLUSTRATING CONCERN FOR OTHERS**

##### **PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN – Luke 10:15-37**

<sup>25</sup> *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

<sup>26</sup> *“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”*

<sup>27</sup> *He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind<sup>[c]</sup>; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>[d]</sup>’”*

<sup>28</sup> *“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”*

<sup>29</sup> *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

<sup>30</sup> *In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and*

*when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'*

<sup>36</sup> *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

<sup>37</sup> *The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

*Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is precipitated by and in answer to a question posed to Jesus by a lawyer. In this case the lawyer would have been an expert in the Mosaic Law and not a court lawyer of today. The lawyer's question was, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). This question provided Jesus with an opportunity to define what His disciples' relationship should be to their neighbors. The text says that the scribe (lawyer) had put the question to Jesus as a test, but the text does not indicate that there was hostility in the question. He could have simply been seeking information. The wording of the question does, however, give us some insight into where the scribe's heart was spiritually. He was making the assumption that man must do something to obtain eternal life. Although this could have been an opportunity for Jesus to discuss salvation issues, He chose a different course and focuses on our relationships and what it means to love.

Jesus answers the question using what is called the Socratic method; i.e., answering a question with a question: "He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?'" (Luke 10:26). By referring to the Law, Jesus is directing the man to an authority they both would accept as truth, the Old Testament. In essence, He is asking the scribe, what does Scripture say about this and how does he interpret it? Jesus thus avoids an argument and puts Himself in the position of evaluating the scribe's answer instead of the scribe evaluating His answer. This directs the discussion towards Jesus' intended lesson. The scribe answers Jesus' question by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. This is virtually the same answer that Jesus had given to the same question in Matthew 22 and Mark 12.

In verse 28, Jesus affirms that the lawyer's answer is correct. Jesus' reply tells the scribe that he has given an orthodox (scripturally proper) answer, but then goes on in verse 28 to tell him that this kind of love requires more than an emotional feeling; it would also include orthodox practice; he would need to "practice what he preached." The scribe was an educated man and realized that he could not possibly keep that law, nor would he have necessarily wanted to. There would always be people in his

life that he could not love. Thus, he tries to limit the law's command by limiting its parameters and asked the question "who is my neighbor?" The word "neighbor" in the Greek means "someone who is near," and in the Hebrew it means "someone that you have an association with." This interprets the word in a limited sense, referring to a fellow Jew and would have excluded Samaritans, Romans, and other foreigners. Jesus then gives the parable of the Good Samaritan to correct the false understanding that the scribe had of who his neighbor is, and what his duty is to his neighbor.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and while on the way he is robbed of everything he had, including his clothing, and is beaten to within an inch of his life. That road was treacherously winding and was a favorite hideout of robbers and thieves. The next character Jesus introduces into His story is a priest. He spends no time describing the priest and only tells of how he showed no love or compassion for the man by failing to help him and passing on the other side of the road so as not to get involved. If there was anyone who would have known God's law of love, it would have been the priest. By nature of his position, he was to be a person of compassion, desiring to help others. Unfortunately, "love" was not a word for him that required action on the behalf of someone else. The next person to pass by in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is a Levite, and he does exactly what the priest did: he passes by without showing any compassion. Again, he would have known the law, but he also failed to show the injured man compassion.

The next person to come by is the Samaritan, the one least likely to have shown compassion for the man. Samaritans were considered a low class of people by the Jews since they had intermarried with non-Jews and did not keep all the law. Therefore, Jews would have nothing to do with them. We do not know if the injured man was a Jew or Gentile, but it made no difference to the Samaritan; he did not consider the man's race or religion. The "Good Samaritan" saw only a person in dire need of assistance, and assist him he did, above and beyond the minimum required. He dresses the man's wounds with wine (to disinfect) and oil (to sooth the pain). He puts the man on his animal and takes him to an inn for a time of healing and pays the innkeeper with his own money. He then goes beyond common decency and tells the innkeeper to take good care of the man, and he would pay for any extra expenses on his return trip. The Samaritan saw his neighbor as anyone who was in need.

Because the good man was a Samaritan, Jesus is drawing a strong contrast between those who knew the law and those who actually followed the law in their lifestyle and conduct. Jesus now asks the lawyer if he can apply the lesson to his own life with the question "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36). Once again, the lawyer's answer is telling of his personal hardness of heart. He cannot bring himself to say the word "Samaritan"; he refers to the "good man" as "he who showed mercy." His hate for the Samaritans (his

neighbors) was so strong that he couldn't even refer to them in a proper way. Jesus then tells the lawyer to "go and do likewise," meaning that he should start living what the law tells him to do.

By ending the encounter in this manner, Jesus is telling us to follow the Samaritan's example in our own conduct; i.e., we are to show compassion and love for those we encounter in our everyday activities. We are to love others (vs. 27) regardless of their race or religion; the criterion is need. If they need and we have the supply, then we are to give generously and freely, without expectation of return. This is an impossible obligation for the lawyer, and for us. We cannot always keep the law because of our human condition; our heart and desires are mostly of self and selfishness. When left to our own, we do the wrong thing, failing to meet the law. We can hope that the lawyer saw this and came to the realization that there was nothing he could do to justify himself, that he needed a personal savior to atone for his lack of ability to save himself from his sins. Thus, the lessons of the Parable of the Good Samaritan are three-fold: (1) we are to set aside our prejudice and show love and compassion for others.

(2) Our neighbor is anyone we encounter; we are all creatures of the creator and we are to love all of mankind as Jesus has taught.

(3) Keeping the law in its entirety with the intent to save ourselves is an impossible task; we need a savior, and this is Jesus.

## **MORAL LESSONS**

1. Earthly possession is vanity, we should always work to make heaven
2. Being rich is not bad, trying to be rich is not a sin, but don't put the material things ahead of God. God should come first in everything we do.
3. What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lost his soul?

## **ASSESSMENT**

1. What are the greatest inconveniences in your life?
2. Did the expert in the law who questioned and then answered Jesus understand what was necessary to inherit eternal life? Did he summarize the Law correctly? (Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18)
3. After Jesus affirmed his correct reply, what did the legal expert then want to do? (10:29)
4. Jesus replied to the legal expert's question, "who is my neighbor?" with perhaps the best-known parable in the Bible. Let's consider this parable from the point of view of the priest and the Levite. Could they have had good reasons for behaving the way that they did?

5. What natural inclinations make it easier for you to act like the priest and the Levite rather than the Samaritan?
6. What was the Samaritan's response to the situation? Why did he help the beaten man? (10:33) How practical was his approach?
7. How does it feel when someone has mercy on you? How do you feel when you get in trouble because of your own stupid actions? How does mercy feel then?
8. In what ways can you personally or can we as Christians be more like the Samaritan? Is this something to aspire to? Is this something God expects of you?

## **ANSWERS**

### **LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN**

<sup>19</sup> *"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

<sup>22</sup> *"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> 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.'*

<sup>25</sup> *"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. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'*

<sup>27</sup> *"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family; <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'*

<sup>29</sup> *"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'*

<sup>30</sup> *"'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'*

<sup>31</sup> *"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.'*

The parable of the rich fool is found in the book of Luke 12:13–21. Jesus warned His listeners that life is not just about gathering wealth; life is so much more than abundance of possessions. Being wealthy is not just the ultimate but using the wealth to bless others and further the work of God. The man in the parable, referred to as

the rich fool is interested in increasing and accumulating more wealth. The parable teaches that we shouldn't accumulate wealth on earth and leave to accumulate wealth in heaven. We gather treasure in heaven when we help the poor, promote the gospel and work of God. We shouldn't put all our attention and energy in earthly possession, by the way they are all vanity.

Earthly wealth will be left behind when we die, but heavenly wealth stays forever. Jesus doesn't want us to waste our time on material things and then end up forgetting the good heavenly things. Not that being wealthy is bad, but we shouldn't worship our wealth.



## Week 4

### Topic: Maturity and Responsibility

#### The Talents – Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup> “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “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!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “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!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “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? <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

## Discussion Questions

1. What are your five best traits or greatest attributes? – List them
2. In Verse 25:14, the word “it” refers to the kingdom of heaven. To what did Jesus liken it in this parable?
3. On what basis did the master decide to give different amounts of money to each of the three servants? How did the word “talent” come to mean an ability, skill, or aptitude?

The talents were apportioned to them on the basis of their abilities. And note, in Jesus’ times, the word “talent” referred to money and not a talent (aptitude, ability, skill) or spiritual gift, although that may well be the parallel for us today. The word “talent” is derived from the Greek word *talanton*, which means “balance, sum, weight.” So, in fact, the basic root of the word talent as used today to denote the capacity of achievement, success, or ability was originally a unit of weight or money for the payment for goods and services in the ancient world.

### 4. Explanation of Parable

- \* Man goes to another country, stays a long time, and then returns. Man gives resources to servants, expecting them to make a profit in his absence.
- \* First two servants are faithful; they are praised by their master and are given greater authority. Third servant hides what was entrusted to him.
- \* Third servant seeks to excuse himself by accusing his master of being harsh. Third servant claims that he was afraid of his master. Third servant does not make a profit for his master.
- \* First two servants are commended and are rewarded (go to heaven); the third is condemned and punished (goes to hell). Master tells unfaithful servant that he should have put the money in the bank. Money that was given to the third (unfaithful) servant is taken away and given to the faithful servant who gained the most for his master.

5. There are four important elements in this parable: time, money, work, and profit. That seems pretty worldly. What can we say about each element?

Time has been a significant factor in Jesus’ teaching concerning His return at the end of the age, beginning in Matthew chapter 24. Jesus made it clear that His return would not be immediate, but would be only after much trouble and the passing of a considerable period of time. While there would be signs to discern the general “season” of His return, neither the day nor the hour would be known. Beyond this, His return would come at a time when it was not expected

**Money** – This parable tells us that both believers and unbelievers are entrusted with certain things, and that they must give account for their stewardship. Basically all men are accountable to God for how they use (or do not use) those resources which God has entrusted to them.

**Work** – Both the first and second servants immediately set to work with the master's money. It is not the money that goes to work, as such, but the worker. When the third servant's excuses are set aside, it becomes evident that this man is lazy – he didn't do any work.

**Profit** – Those who work with what they are entrusted, in order to make a profit for their master, are rewarded for their faithfulness. Those who are unfaithful lose not only their reward, but their stewardship. Interestingly, we find this same principle stated in connection with the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18). The soil which produces no grain (in other instances, no fruit, or no profit) is bad soil. Only the soil that produces a crop is "good" soil.

6. The master says three things to reward each of the first two servants. They are:

First, they receive their master's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Second, because they have proven themselves to be faithful with the few things entrusted to them, they are now given even greater responsibilities by their master. Third, they are invited to "enter into the joy of your master," which would seem to be the salvation of lost sinners.

7. What is the main characteristic of the third servant that differentiates him from the first two?

In a word, the third slave is lazy, and thus useless, as opposed to being hardworking, and therefore useful. He does not "go to work" with his master's money, over a lengthy period of time, and thus make a profit. He does no work for a lengthy period of time and thus is useless.

8. What was the third servant's excuse for not investing his talent? How did the master respond to his explanation? (25:24-28) What was the ultimate outcome of the third servant?

He was harshly chastised, the talent was taken from him, and he was thrown out "into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," a phrase meant to describe the horrible suffering experience of hell.

9. God rejoices in his servants making a profit. What does a profit mean to God?

If we were to make an equation of this parable, it would probably go like this:  
Resources (talents) + Labor (work) + Time = Profit Just as a businessman expects to make a profit, and is happy when his employees increase his wealth, so God expects a profit and rejoices in it. He has granted the time and the resources for men to make

a profit for the kingdom of heaven, until He returns. The question for us to consider is this: Just how do we measure “spiritual profit”? I think we could all agree that the salvation of lost souls is a profit for the kingdom. Thus, evangelism is one form of spiritual profit. Ephesians 4:11–13 says It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be 11 prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare 12 God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and 13 become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Thus, we can safely conclude that edification or spiritual growth is also profitable for the kingdom of heaven. God also asks us to “walk in his ways” and “obey his commands.” When Jesus was asked what command(ment) was the most important, he actually named two: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like 38 39 it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these 40 two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37–40) Most importantly, bringing glory to God is profitable. Let’s call this aspect of profit exaltation. “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### **The Virgins – Matthew 25:1–13**

*“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup> The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

*<sup>6</sup> “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’*

*<sup>7</sup> “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’*

*<sup>9</sup> “‘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.’*

*<sup>10</sup> “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.*

*<sup>11</sup> “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’*

*<sup>12</sup> “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’*

*<sup>13</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

## Discussion

1. When was a time you were late to an important event? Why were you delayed? Could you have avoided being late?

2. Why were some of the virgins described as foolish? What made the others wise?

According to the Jewish Annotated NT, bridesmaids (here called “virgins”) accompany the bridegroom to the house of the bride and then escort both to the house where the wedding and feast will take place. So at this point, the virgins are waiting to take the first step in the wedding process. “The bridegroom was a long time in coming” (maybe he had a long bachelor party) and didn’t arrive until midnight. Five of the ten virgins had taken extra oil for their lamps and five had not.

3. What did the foolish virgins ask of the others? How did the wise ones respond when asked to help the ones who had not prepared? Was this fair?

The five with no extra oil asked the others for some. Now you might argue that the “Christian,” generous thing to do would have been to help out those who didn’t take extra oil, but we’re beyond that point. In earlier parables, that does, in fact happen (the parable of the early and late workers in the vineyard, for example) but now Jesus is at the point where he is saying, in effect, you’ve heard the message from the prophets and me often enough; it’s up to you to listen to and heed the message, just you yourself—no one else is going to do it for you. No one else is going to pull you along—it’s your decision and yours alone. So that’s what happens here. The ones who heard and heeded the message, the wise virgins, told the others to go buy their own oil.

4. What was the response of the bridegroom to some of the virgins that came to the wedding late? (Matthew 25:12) What does the parable teach?

This is one of the few times that he shows them no mercy. He says, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ There is no deep or hidden meaning to this parable. The virgins represent people who have heard the good news, the Christian story. The bridegroom is Christ and the delay in his return is the delay until the second coming of Christ. The sudden coming at midnight is the unexpected time of his return (no one knows when except the Father). Those who are properly prepared are welcomed into the kingdom of heaven whereas those who are not are spurned in the final judgement. Verse 13 reads, “Look that ye watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor yet the hour, when the son of man shall come.” Some commentators say the oil represents righteousness, good deeds, faith, or the Holy Spirit, but it probably just means that proper preparation of the second coming of Christ is needed. The Oxford Bible Commentary says the parable teaches three lessons:

- 1) No one knows the date or time of Christ's second coming.
- 2) Those who are faithful and prepared will be rewarded at the end times.
- 3) Those who are unfaithful and unprepared will suffer eternal punishment.

## Week 5

### Topic: Jesus Christ and the Laws

**Text: Luke 2:22-24, 41-51, Matthew 22:15-22, 17:24-27, 19:16-22**

#### Civil and Religious Laws

##### Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)

*17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

#### Commentary Notes:

5:17 Do not think (lit. "stop thinking") – implies they were thinking this already.

5:17 Law or the Prophets – This is the way a first century Jew understood our current Old Testament. Sometimes it would be "The Law, the Prophets and the Writings", or the shortened form "Law and the Prophets". Our current Old Testament is broken down into 39 separate books, but the Jewish Bible is divided differently, though all of the information is the same. Jesus is referring to our Old Testament in its entirety.

5:18 The jot, or yod, is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; the tittle is a small mark or projection that serves to distinguish one letter from another, much as the bottom stroke of a capital E distinguishes it from a capital F.

5:20 To gain entrance into the kingdom, our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (who were content with religious ceremonies which gave them an outward, ritual cleansing, but which never changed their hearts). Jesus uses hyperbole (exaggeration) to drive home the truth that external righteousness without internal reality will not gain entrance into the kingdom. The only righteousness that God will accept is the perfection that He imputes to those who accept His Son as Savior (2 Cor. 5:21). Of course, where there is true faith in Christ, there will also be the practical righteousness that Jesus describes in the remainder of the Sermon.

If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does that mean all the Old Testament laws still apply to us today? In the Old Testament, there were three categories of law: ceremonial, civil, and moral.

1. The ceremonial law related specifically to Israel's worship (see Leviticus 1:2,3, for example). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ; these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial laws, the principles behind them — to worship and love a holy God— still apply. Jesus was often accused by the Pharisees of violating ceremonial law.
2. The civil law applied to daily living in Israel (see Deuteronomy 24:10,11, for example). Because modern society and culture are so radically different from that time and setting, all of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands are timeless and should guide our conduct. Jesus demonstrated these principles by example.
3. The moral law (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience (see Exodus 20:13, for example). The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today. Jesus obeyed the moral law completely. "Should I obey the Ten Commandments?" The answer is that certain principles contained in the law are of lasting relevance. It is always wrong to steal, to covet, or to murder. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, with an important distinction—they are not given as law (with penalty attached), but as training in righteousness for the people of God (2 Tim. 3:16b). The one commandment not repeated is the Sabbath law: Christians are never taught to keep the Sabbath (i.e., the seventh day of the week).
4. Jesus Pay Tax – Matthew 22:15-22 <sup>15</sup> *Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.<sup>16</sup> They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.<sup>17</sup> Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax<sup>a1</sup> to Caesar or not?"*
5. <sup>18</sup> *But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?"<sup>19</sup> Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius,<sup>20</sup> and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"*
6. <sup>21</sup> *"Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."<sup>22</sup> When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.*
7. As much as we hate taxes, as much as the tax system is corrupt and unfair, as much as there are far better things our money could go towards—the Bible commands, yes, commands us to pay our taxes. Romans 13:1-7 makes it clear that we are to submit ourselves to the government. The only instance in which we are allowed to disobey the government is when it tells us to do something



the Bible forbids. The Bible does not forbid paying taxes. In fact, the Bible encourages us to pay taxes. Therefore, we must submit to God and His Word—and pay our taxes.

8. The most frequent objection to paying taxes is that the money is being misused by the government or even used for evil purposes by the government. That, however, is not our concern. When Jesus said, “Give to Caesar...,” the Roman government was by no means a righteous government. When Paul instructed us to pay taxes, Nero, the most evil Roman emperor in history, was the head of the government. We are to pay our taxes even when the government is not God-honoring.

## **ASSESSMENT**

1. If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does that mean all the Old Testament laws still apply to us today? Discuss with scriptures?

## Week 6

### Topic: Jesus Christ Improves Upon the Law

**Text: Matthew 5:21-48**

#### **Murder**

*<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’<sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

*<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

*<sup>25</sup> “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.<sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*

Jesus said that He did not come to condemn the law but to fulfill it. He did not perform the duty of condemning the obnoxious laws but also improved the good ones. He cited examples with the following laws: murder, adultery, swearing, retaliation and the love of enemies.

In the commandment against murder, it is stated; “thou shall not kill”. Jesus went as far as tracing the reason why people kill. He maintained that killing is subject to anger. He made it clear that when we control anger in our lives, we will not quarrel which usually leads to injury and killing as well. Precisely, He said that people should control their anger.

Again the law on Adultery says; “thou shall not commit adultery”. The punishment for such was simply to stone the person to death. But Jesus said that even the way men look at women was equal to committing adultery. So according to Jesus, it is the sinful way by which men look at women that leads to committing adultery.

Moreover, the Jewish law on swearing says, “you shall not swear falsely” the essence of swearing is to show that one is telling nothing but the truth. But Jesus added that people should try as much as possible to be honest in all that they think, say or do. That would help them to avoid swearing entirely.

Furthermore, the Jewish law on retaliation says, “an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth”. The reason according to them was for peace to reign but Jesus said the best thing was not to retaliate at all. People should not pay back evil to their fellow human beings.

Finally, the Jewish law on the love of enemy says; “you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy”. The reason for making this law was to keep people among the people, which, in actual sense of it was not. Jesus advised people to keep peace with their enemies instead of hating them.

Jesus Christ teaches that love is the supreme law.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is love. So he asked his disciples to love one another and regard love as the new commandment. This was because the whole nature of God is love.

In first Corinthians chapter thirteen verse four to eight; St Paul wrote about some of the qualities of love. He said; “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude; love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never ends”.

### **The qualities of love are as follows**

- Love is patient
- It is kind
- It is humble and
- It is faithful

### **MORAL LESSON**

1. Even Jesus was subject to the law, therefore we must follow suit.
2. We must learn to teach children to follow the law in our society.
3. Civil and religious taxes are among our duties and obligation and must be paid.
4. We must learn to improve and update good laws in our society.
5. We must learn to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

### **ASSESSMENT**

1. List FOUR qualities of love?

# Week 7

## Topic: Types of Parables

**Text: Matthew 18:12-24, John 10:1-18**

### **Parable of the Lost Sheep — Matthew 18:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> *“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. <sup>14</sup> In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.*

### **Parable of the Shepherd and His Flock – John 10:1-18**

*“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.*

<sup>7</sup> *Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

<sup>11</sup> *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

<sup>14</sup> *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father*

*loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

## **Lesson Notes**

John 10:1-6 – The Sheep, the Shepherd, and Sheep Robbers Verses 1-5 are in the form of a parable. Scholars debate whether this is a single parable once told by Jesus, or several parables told by Jesus combined here by the gospel writer. It is likely here that Jesus was drawing upon Ezekiel 34 in his metaphorical use of sheep language. Ezekiel described Israel as God’s flock and the rulers (kings) as the shepherds. Rather than feeding the sheep, the rulers alternately ignore the flock and actually prey upon them instead of protecting them. As a result the flock is scattered and devoured by the wild animals. The false shepherds will be removed from their position of leadership and God will again be the shepherd of his people. He will gather them and lead them to good pasture. He will appoint a shepherd over them from David’s line and bring peace to the flock.

Ezekiel 34 is a startlingly clear description of the way Jesus portrayed himself as the good shepherd. Verses 1-3a describe the proper way to approach the sheep—through the door or gate of the sheepfold. Anyone who approaches another way has evil intentions. Verses 3b-5 focus more on the close relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. The shepherd knows his sheep and calls his own sheep by name. They follow at the sound of his voice. Sheep will not follow a stranger.

Verses 1-5 reflect common practices and understanding of shepherding in Palestine at that time. When not out in the open the sheep were kept in an enclosure made of stone walls. The size varied considerably. But all had an entrance where the shepherd took the sheep in and out. Obviously anyone who entered the pen by climbing over the wall rather than by the entrance was up to no good. The sheep did learn the shepherd’s voice. In the summer the sheep were taken into the rural areas to graze far away from home. There several flocks would be bedded down at night in a large fold built with stone walls. In the morning each shepherd called for his sheep and the flocks separated from each other simply by recognition of and response to the voice of their own shepherd. The shepherd would then lead the flock to the grazing area he had selected for that day. Who was the audience for this parable (or parables)? The flow of the gospel suggests that the Jewish leaders of chapter 9 form that audience. Jesus is accusing those Jewish religious leaders of being false shepherds. They are the thieves and robbers mentioned in verse 1. He is the shepherd whose voice the sheep follow. They are the strangers—the rustlers who care nothing for the sheep but only for the profit they can make for themselves from the sheep.

Why did they not understand it? Simply because of their own hard heartedness. They refuse to allow the parable to expose their own sinfulness and need of God. When

reading the parables, indeed all the teaching, of Jesus, we need to be asking, “What does this reveal about me?” “Do I need to be different?” “What does God want to do in changing my attitudes, thoughts, and life?” John 10:7-18 – Jesus’ Application of the Parable(s) Verses 7-18 arise from the same arena of life described in verses 1-5, but they develop their own direction and meaning. Jesus describes himself in verses 7-10 as the gate (or door) for the sheep and as the good shepherd in verses 11-18. Verses 1-5 provide the environment or atmosphere for understanding Jesus’ descriptions of himself. The focus on Jesus’ identity in John 10:22-42 also implies that the purpose of verses 1-18 is understanding who Jesus is. There are two different applications of the gate metaphor in verses 7-10. Verse 8 interprets Jesus as the gate by which the shepherd comes to the sheep. The thieves and robbers did not come through Jesus, the door, to get at the sheep. The fact that they used other means proves that they are imposters. If Jesus is the door by which the authentic shepherd comes to the sheep then Jesus is not the shepherd at this point, but God is. Verses 7-8 seem to be saying that Jesus is the door by which God comes to shepherd us. This view assumes the background of Ezekiel 34 where God is the shepherd of Israel. This is a beautiful picture of the Incarnation. It is God who comes to care for us through Jesus. The door metaphor is then turned around in verses 9-10. Here Jesus is the door by which the sheep go out to find pasture, salvation, and life. There is no other way by which the sheep can find these benefits. If they do not come through Christ, they will not find life and salvation. If they follow the thief they will find death and destruction. This is another beautiful picture of Jesus. It clearly teaches that he is the only way for salvation. Verse 10 concludes this section with a statement of Jesus’ purpose. I came in order that they might have life and that they might have it in abundance. Raymond Brown points out that the pasture of verse 9 leads to life in verse 10. John has already described Jesus as the source of living water (water of life) and as the bread of life. Now, within the metaphor of sheep, Jesus provides the pasture of life. And that pasture is abundant; it provides all that is needed and fully satisfies. Jesus is not just the only way by which salvation and life can be obtained. The life that he provides is totally sufficient and satisfying. Verses 11-18 change the metaphor from Jesus as the door to Jesus as the shepherd. These verses are also built around parallel statements by Jesus, “I am the good shepherd,” in verses 11 and 14. Several new thoughts or developments, not implied in verses 1-5, appear. The most significant new thought is the theme of the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep (verses 11b and 15b), and the indirect application of this to Jesus in verses 17b and 18. The risky responsibility of the shepherd is not the only conflict-oriented material in the passage. The contrast between the genuine shepherd and the imposter appears in terms of response to impending danger. The imposter flees before the wolf; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. These verses also introduce the concept of other sheep and other folds. The imposter in verses 12-13 is the hireling as opposed to the thief of the preceding verses. The hireling is not attempting to harm or steal the sheep. In fact, the hireling’s motive is good. He is

a protector, one who cares for the sheep. However, the point of mentioning the hireling is to show the contrasting levels of commitment. When push comes to shove, the hireling is more interested in protecting himself than the sheep. In contrast, the good shepherd, Jesus, has no concern above caring for and protecting the sheep. Thus verses 11-13 speak both of Jesus' character as the Good Shepherd and of the care that the church receives as His flock. Sheep are not created for autonomy. They cannot survive running their own lives by themselves. Neither can the church nor individual believers. Genuine faith or trust in Christ only exists as we are confident that the Shepherd is more concerned for us than for his own welfare. Verses 9-10 suggest that his care includes salvation, nurture, and abundant life. These benefits are not just one-time, past benefits of the death of Christ, but the ongoing, present blessings and concern of the risen Lord. The repetition of "I am the good shepherd," in verse 14 marks the next step in the development of the text. Verses 14-15 focus on the relationship of the shepherd and the sheep. I know my own and my own know me. Verses 11-13 had focused on care and dependence, but verses 14-15 center on intimacy. The care of a shepherd for his sheep may be tender and loving, but the metaphor lacks a personal dimension for most of us. The intimacy of Jesus' care for us and for his church is not simply that of a shepherd for sheep but the same kind of intimate relationship shared by Christ and the Father. The intimate relationship of Christ and his followers that is portrayed here also advances beyond the sheep/shepherd metaphor by its mutual character. The double repetition of "know" emphasizes the mutuality involved. "I know my own and my own know me." "The Father knows me and I know the Father." If sheep of the shepherd were the only metaphor for the church, it would be too easy to view all the responsibility and energy in the relationship between Christ and us as flowing from the shepherd to the sheep. The introduction of mutual personal relationship means that we bear significant responsibility also. We dare not simply absorb the care of the Good Shepherd directed toward us; we must share in His concerns and participate in His mission. Verse 16 turns suddenly to what appears to be an entirely new concept—other sheep, another fold. This is a clear reference to God's concern for the Gentiles (already expressed in the Old Testament) and to the Gentile mission of the church. In the context of the mutuality of the relationship between Christ and us there is only one conclusion that can be drawn. People who share intimacy with Christ will bring the other sheep and make it possible for those not of this fold to heed his voice. When we are in mutual relationship with Christ we pursue his agenda of one flock, one shepherd. Verses 17-18 appear disconnected from the sheep/shepherd metaphor that has been at the center of chapter 10 thus far. However, they are a reflection on the meaning of Jesus, as good shepherd, laying down his life for the sheep and so they belong with verses 11-16. Several new ideas enter the passage in these verses. Verse 17 specifically mentions love for the first time. The statement that the Father loves Jesus "because" the Son is laying down his life does not mean that Jesus earns the Father's love by his sacrificial death. Rather, the laying down of



Jesus' life for the sheep is the "act which expresses the perfect accord between them." The mutual relationship of intimacy between Jesus and the Father points to a shared purpose as well as to love. The love of Christ for us, the love of the Father for Jesus, and the laying down of Christ's life are inextricably linked.

## **MORAL LESSONS**

1. This also means that God really wants us to repent and turn to Him.
2. The kingdom of God is always open to welcome repentant sinners.
3. Do not discriminate and condemn sinners
4. Don't judge other people
5. If you are an addicted sinner Jesus is looking for you, make yourself available by repenting from your sins
6. God's love towards us is unconditional
7. As Christians (sheep), we are expected to hear the voice of God (good shepherd) and obey him

## **Discussion Questions**

1. To what lengths would you go to recover a missing wallet? Your mother's lost diamond ring? An important irreplaceable document? A winning lottery ticket? Your missing child?
2. Bible commentators are divided about the meaning of the parable of the lost sheep. Some think the flock represents Christian believers and the lost sheep refers to a weak believer who has slid backward and strayed from his belief in Jesus. Others think that those who belong to Christ are eternally secure and cannot wander so far as to get lost. They think the lost sheep refer to the unredeemed of Israel (in Jesus' day) who characteristically hadn't listened and were prone to wandering far away. Today, the lost sheep would be a nominal Christian who behaves in a way inconsistent with that of a child of God. What do you think?
3. Does it change your image of God to see him as a caring shepherd searching frantically for one lost individual? How does this jell with the image of God as a judge to whom we must give account? (Hebrews 4:13)
4. What kind of relationship do sheep have with their shepherd? (10:2-4)

5. To whom did Jesus say the sheep would not listen? (10:5, 10:8) Who did Jesus say was the thief? (10:1) Who does the stranger or thief represent today?
6. In this parable, Jesus describes himself as both the gate (10:7) and the shepherd (10:11, 10:14). Which image do you like better?
7. Gates can be used to keep some things in and some out. Which side of the gate that Jesus described are you on? (Be careful answering this.) (10:9) How has Jesus been a gate in your life?
8. What does a hired hand do for the sheep? (10:12) What was Jesus willing to do for his sheep? (10:11, 10:15, 10:17) What does it mean when Jesus repeats something three times?
9. How are we like sheep? What tempts people to follow a stranger (or thief)? Why?
10. In what ways has Jesus been your shepherd? How can we better hear his voice?

## Week 8

### Topic: Parables Illustrating God's Love

**Text: Luke 15:1-31**

#### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

*15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

*<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' <sup>7</sup> 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."*

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Jesus told two previous parables about sheep (Matthew 18:12-14, John 10:1- 18). In the first, he contrasted the sheep to "little ones" (children, seekers). In the second, he contrasted the sheep to ones who know him (followers, Christians). In this parable, to whom does he contrast the herd of sheep? The lost sheep?
2. "Sinner" is not a word that often comes up in casual conversation. What comes to mind when you hear the word? What word(s) would we more likely use to refer to a "sinner" today (crook, criminal, wrongdoer, evildoer, offender, embezzler, scamster etc)? Do any modern words really describe the concept?
3. What does the word "sin" mean? Does it mean something different to different religious groups (Jews, Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Protestants, Christians)?
4. Who was Jesus' audience for this parable? (15:1-2)
5. How are we like sheep? In what ways do we go astray?
6. Jesus says the shepherd will hunt for a lost sheep and bring it home and there will be rejoicing. But in Verse 15:7, he implies that a lost sinner must do one additional thing that a sheep does not have to do. What is it that we need to do?
7. How does the picture of "rejoicing in heaven" over repentance make you feel?

In this parable, Jesus compares the flock of 99 who were not lost with righteous people who do not need to repent. Actually, the word “righteous” means “right with God,” which means those people who have already repented and received forgiveness and mercy from God. No one is totally free from sin—at some point everyone must repent and be born again, but even after being born again, being accepted by God and receiving eternal salvation from him, we still should continue to repent of our sins and ask God to continue forgiving us. The lost sheep in the parable is the lost sinner who has not already repented. Or it might possibly even be one who had been born again and then deliberately turned his back on the Lord.

Sin is a term used mainly in a religious context to describe an act that violates a moral rule or one of God’s laws. Commonly, the moral code of conduct is decreed by a divine entity. Sin is often used to mean an action that is prohibited or considered wrong; in some religions (notably some sects of Christianity), sin can even refer to a state of mind rather than a specific action. Colloquially, any thought, word, or act considered immoral, shameful, harmful, or alienating might be termed “sinful.”

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

*<sup>8</sup> “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins<sup>[a]</sup> and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?<sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’<sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

1. What value did the woman place on each coin? Why did she look so hard for it?
2. How is a repentant sinner like a found coin? Why does God care so much about repentant sinners?

Like finding a valuable and sentimental coin, so do the angels of God rejoice over a repentant sinner. Each individual is precious to God. He grieves over every loss and rejoices whenever one of his children is found and brought back into the kingdom.

3. How many repentant sinners does it take to cause heavenly rejoicing? How does that make you feel? Just one!
4. In what ways does God’s value of people differ from ours? Who would you rejoice more over accepting Jesus as savior, a close family member or a scavenger ? (Be honest!)

## The Parable of the Lost Son

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> "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. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "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. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> 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.'"

The story is about a wealthy man who had two sons. The younger one asked and got his own share of his father's wealth. He left to another town and spent it recklessly with friends and women; it wasn't long the money finished, his friends left him alone. He had nothing to eat again, and no one to help him. Later he started working for a man who reared animals. His work was to feed pigs. Jews hate pigs, but he had no option- a beggar has no choice. He got so hungry that he wished to eat the pigs' food. He started shorting the food rations of the pigs. Imagine. After suffering from hunger and starvation, and loneliness he came to his sense. He said to himself: "How many of my father's hired servants have enough food to eat and to spare, but I perish here with hunger, I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."

After thinking this he arose and returned home. His father welcomed him warmly and organised a welcome party for him. His elder brother returned from the farm and became sad that his father is hosting a party for his reckless brother, and that his father had never organised a party for him that has been serving faithfully all those years. His father begged him saying: "Son you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to host a party and be glad for this your brother was dead and is now alive; he was lost and is found. "

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do you feel when others get rewards greater than they deserve? (Or perhaps we should say greater than you think they deserve.)
2. Who do the three major people in the parable represent (father, older son, younger son) in Jesus' day? Who do they represent today?
3. What share of the estate would the younger son be entitled to? (Deut 21:17) When would he receive this? By asking for his share early, what did the younger son show?
4. What are the differences and similarities between this parable and the two preceding ones? (All three were told at the same time to the same mixed audience of tax collectors, "sinners," Pharisees, teachers of the [Jewish] law, and followers.)
5. What causes you to show resentment when mercy or favor is shown to someone else?
6. Who is the vilest person you know or know about? What would you do if that person said he (or she) wants to be forgiven?
7. How can you guard yourself from feeling resentful when God shows mercy to people you think don't deserve it?

8. Is there a totally undeserving person to whom you can extend God's love and forgiveness this week? How?

9. The older son was invited by the father to return to the feast. Did he? 10. What do the three parables in Luke 15 (lost sheep, lost coin, lost son) reveal about God's love?

## **MORAL LESSONS**

1. God is ever ready to welcome sinners to his fold
2. There is hope for the sinners
3. God is happy when we abandon our sinful ways
4. There is joy in the presence of the Lord, outside God all you will meet is vanity, sorrow and emptiness.
5. Prepare your heart to receive God's words
6. God words is not a novel, read it with attention and seriousness

## **EVALUATION**

1. What is the meaning of the following: sower, seed and soil?
2. Narrate the meaning of each group of sown seeds
3. Why was party hosted for the prodigal son?

# **THIRD TERM NOTES ON CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**



**Week 1**

**Topic: Revision**

**Revision of Last Term's Work**

## Week 2

### Topic: The Passion of Christ

**Text: Matthew 21:1-12**

*21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."*

*<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*<sup>5</sup> "Say to Daughter Zion,  
'See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

*<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.<sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.<sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.<sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*"Hosanna<sup>[b]</sup> to the Son of David!"*

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*"Hosanna<sup>[d]</sup> in the highest heaven!"*

*<sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"*

*<sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

The triumphal entry is that of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday, the Sunday before the crucifixion (John 12:1, 12). The story of the triumphal entry is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus which appears in all four Gospel accounts (Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19). Putting the four accounts together, it becomes clear that the triumphal entry was a significant event, not only to the people of Jesus' day, but to Christians throughout history. We celebrate Palm Sunday to remember that momentous occasion.

Christ informed the disciples that as they entered the village they would find a female donkey secured by a "tie." With her would be a colt, also hitched. The disciples were

to “unloose” and bring back both animals. They would be questioned by the animals’ owners (plural — Lk. 19:33) as to what they were doing. Their response was to be, “The Lord has need of them.” Immediately permission would be granted. This was not a pre-arranged agreement; rather, it provides a dramatic example of the Lord’s exercise of supernatural knowledge whenever the circumstances demanded such (cf. Lk. 19:32). It is worthy of note as well that the owners of these donkeys were obviously disciples of the Master, as indicated by their unhesitating response to the designation “Lord.”

On that day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey’s colt, one that had never been ridden before. The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to sit on, and the multitudes came out to welcome Him, laying before Him their cloaks and the branches of palm trees. The people hailed and praised Him as the “King who comes in the name of the Lord” as He rode to the temple, where He taught the people, healed them, and drove out the money-changers and merchants who had made His Father’s house a “den of robbers” (Mark 11:17).

Jesus’ purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to make public His claim to be their Messiah and King of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew says that the King coming on the foal of a donkey was an exact fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, “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.” Jesus rides into His capital city as a conquering King and is hailed by the people as such, in the manner of the day. The streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him, and like a king He ascends to His palace, not a temporal palace but the spiritual palace that is the temple, because His is a spiritual kingdom. He receives the worship and praise of the people because only He deserves it. No longer does He tell His disciples to be quiet about Him (Matthew 12:16, 16:20) but to shout His praises and worship Him openly. The spreading of cloaks was an act of homage for royalty (see 2 Kings 9:13). Jesus was openly declaring to the people that He was their King and the Messiah they had been waiting for.

Both Matthew and John contend that this incident was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The former cites Zechariah 9:9 specifically; the latter alludes to it more generally.

The prophet Zechariah was among the 50,000 or so Jews who returned in the first wave of Hebrews released from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. He wrote about five centuries before the birth of Jesus (520 B.C. – cf. Zech. 1:1). The prophet’s main emphasis was to rekindle spiritual fervor in Israel’s hearts after they had fallen into a state of listlessness. Chapters 9–14 are heavily Messianic in argument. The prophecy under consideration reads as follows:

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your king coming unto you; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech 9:9).*

Unfortunately, the praise the people lavished on Jesus was not because they recognized Him as their Savior from sin. They welcomed Him out of their desire for a messianic deliverer, someone who would lead them in a revolt against Rome. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ as Savior, nevertheless hoped that perhaps He would be to them a great temporal deliverer. These are the ones who hailed Him as King with their many hosannas, recognizing Him as the Son of David who came in the name of the Lord. But when He failed in their expectations, when He refused to lead them in a massive revolt against the Roman occupiers, the crowds quickly turned on Him. Within just a few days, their hosannas would change to cries of “Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:20–21). Those who hailed Him as a hero would soon reject and abandon Him.

### **Assessment**

- What was Jesus’ purpose in riding into Jerusalem?
- Why is Palm Sunday celebrated?

## Week 3

### Topic: The Cleaning of the Temple

**Text: Matthew 21:12-17**

*<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. <sup>13</sup> “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.”*

*<sup>14</sup> The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.*

*<sup>16</sup> “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.*

*“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,*

*“From the lips of children and infants  
you, Lord, have called forth your praise’?”*

*<sup>17</sup> And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*

Entering the Temple, Jesus saw the money changers, along with merchants who were selling animals for sacrifice. Pilgrims carried coins from their hometowns, most bearing the images of Roman emperors or Greek gods, which Temple authorities considered idolatrous. Jesus cleansed the temple of the money-changers and sellers of merchandise because of his disgust at what they had made of God's house of prayer and His zeal to purify it from the abuse of ungodly men. Judea was under the rule of the Romans, and the money in current use was Roman coin. However, the Jewish law required that every man should pay a tribute to the service of the sanctuary of “half a shekel” (Exodus 30:11-16), a Jewish coin. It became, therefore, a matter of convenience to have a place where the Roman coin could be exchanged for the Jewish half shekel. The money-changers provided this convenience but would demand a small sum for the exchange. Because so many thousands of people came up to the great feasts, changing money was a very profitable business and one that resulted in fraud and oppression of the poor.

Jesus was so filled with anger at the desecration of the holy place that he took some cords and wove them into a small whip. He ran about, knocking over the tables of the

money changers, spilling coins on the ground. He drove the exchangers out of the area, along with the men selling pigeons and cattle. He also prevented people from using the court as a shortcut.

As he cleansed the Temple of greed and profit, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 56:7: “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:13, ESV)

The disciples and others present were in awe of Jesus’ authority in God’s sacred place. His followers remembered a passage from Psalm 69:9: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (John 2:17, ESV).

### **POINTS OF INTEREST FROM THE STORY:**

- Jesus drove out the money changers from the Temple on Monday of Passion Week, just three days before the Passover and four days before his crucifixion.
- Bible scholars think this incident happened at Solomon’s Porch, the outermost part on the east side of the Temple. Archaeologists have found a Greek inscription dated to 20 B.C. from the Court of the Gentiles, which warns non-Jews not to go any further into the Temple, on fear of death.
- The high priest received a percentage of the profit from the money changers and merchants, so their removal from the Temple precinct would have caused a financial loss to him. Because pilgrims were unfamiliar with Jerusalem, the Temple merchants sold sacrificial animals at a higher price than elsewhere in the city. The high priest overlooked their dishonesty, as long as he got his share.
- Beside his anger at the money changers’ greed, Jesus hated the noise and commotion in the court, which would have made it impossible for devout Gentiles to pray there.
- About 40 years from the time Jesus cleansed the Temple, the Romans would invade Jerusalem during an uprising and level the building completely. It would never be rebuilt. Today on its location on the Temple Mount stands the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim mosque.
- The Gospels tell us that Jesus Christ was ushering in a new covenant with humanity, in which animal sacrifice would end, replaced by the perfect sacrifice of his life on the cross, atoning for human sin once and for all.

### **QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:**

Jesus cleansed the Temple because sinful activities interfered with worship. Do I need to cleanse my heart of attitudes or actions that are coming between me and God?

# Week 4

## Topic: The Last Supper

**Text: Mark 10:14-25**

*<sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup> They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*

### The Last Supper

*<sup>12</sup> On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"*

*<sup>13</sup> So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup> Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."*

*<sup>16</sup> The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.*

*<sup>17</sup> When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."*

*<sup>19</sup> They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"*

*<sup>20</sup> "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> 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."*

*<sup>22</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."*

*<sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*

*<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*



The last supper took place on the first day of Passover, or the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Jesus sent his disciples ahead into the city to prepare a meal to celebrate Passover. Passover is the remembrance of Israel being freed from slavery to Egypt and specifically when the angel of death passed over the homes of the Israelites that had lambs blood over the doors. That evening Jesus sat down at the table with the apostles to eat his final meal before going to the cross. As they dined together, he told the twelve that one of them would soon betray him.

One by one they questioned, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?" Jesus explained that even though he knew it was his destiny to die as the Scriptures foretold, his betrayer's fate would be terrible: "Far better for him if he had never been born!"

As the disciples reclined and ate dinner with Jesus, he explained to them that one of the twelve of them would soon betray him. One by one the disciplines denied that it would be them, including Judas who would be the betrayer. Jesus responded that the person who betrays him will have a terrible fate and that indeed, it was Judas.

Jesus prayed and thanked God for the meal. He then broke the bread and shared the wine with the disciples and explained to them how the bread was a symbol of his body, broken for them, and the wine a symbol of his blood which would be poured out for their sins to be forgiven. This is where the churches tradition of communion comes from.

After the meal, Jesus became like a servant and washed the feet of the disciples. Peter did not feel right having Jesus wash his feet but Jesus said that He was doing it to be an example to them. Now the disciples would be able to wash each other's feet, meaning they could be servants to all.

### **POINTS FROM THE LESSON:**

- The Passover commemorated Israel's escape from bondage in Egypt. In Exodus, the blood of the Passover lamb was painted on the door frames, causing the plague of the firstborn to pass over their houses sparing the firstborn sons from death. The Last Supper was very significant because Jesus showed his disciples he was about to become the Passover Lamb of God. His blood would open the door to freedom. His followers would exchange slavery to sin and death for eternal life in God's Kingdom.
- According to Jewish tradition, the four cups represent four expressions of redemption. The first cup is called the cup of sanctification; the second is the cup of judgment; the third is the cup of redemption; and the fourth is the cup of the kingdom.

- Judas had already determined that he would betray Jesus, yet still he shared in the communion of the Passover meal.
- There are 3 main Christian views regarding the bread and the wine during the practice of Communion:
  1. The bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ.
  2. The bread and the wine are unchanged elements, but Christ's presence by faith is made spiritually real in and through them. This is known as "Real Presence."
  3. The bread and the wine are unchanged elements, used as symbols, representing Christ's body and blood, in remembrance of his enduring sacrifice.

### **QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:**

At the Last Supper, each of the disciples questioned Jesus (paraphrased): "Could I be the one to betray you, Lord?" I would guess at that moment they were also questioning their own hearts. A little while later, Jesus predicted Peter's three-fold denial. In our walk of faith, are there times when we should stop and ask ourselves:

- *How true is my commitment to the Lord?*
- *Do I profess to love and follow Christ, yet deny him with my actions?*
- *If I was in Peter's Shoes, will I deny Jesus?*
- *Are there ways in which I have denied Jesus with my actions?*
- *What can separate me from the love of God, trials, temptations, money, challenges, family etc*

## Week 5

### Topic: The Betrayal and the Arrest of Jesus

**Text: Mark 14:26-52**

<sup>26</sup> *When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

<sup>27</sup> *"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:*

*"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered.'*

<sup>28</sup> *But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

<sup>29</sup> *Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."*

<sup>30</sup> *"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."*

<sup>31</sup> *But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.*

Gethsemane

<sup>32</sup> *They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."*<sup>33</sup> *He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.*<sup>34</sup> *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."*

<sup>35</sup> *Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.*<sup>36</sup> *"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

<sup>37</sup> *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?"*<sup>38</sup> *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

<sup>39</sup> *Once more he went away and prayed the same thing.*<sup>40</sup> *When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.*

<sup>41</sup> *Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners."*<sup>42</sup> *Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"*

## Jesus Arrested

<sup>43</sup> Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

<sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard."<sup>45</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>46</sup> The men seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

<sup>48</sup> "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?"<sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."<sup>50</sup> Then everyone deserted him and fled.

<sup>51</sup> A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, <sup>52</sup> he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

It is well past midnight. The priests have agreed to pay Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. So Judas leads a large crowd of chief priests and Pharisees, seeking to find Jesus. They are accompanied by a detachment of armed Roman soldiers with a military commander.

Evidently, when Jesus dismissed him from the Passover meal, Judas went directly to the chief priests. (John 13:27) They assembled their own officers as well as a band of soldiers. Judas may have led them first to the room where Jesus and his apostles had celebrated the Passover. But now the mob has crossed the Kidron Valley and is headed for the garden. In addition to weapons, they are carrying lamps and torches, determined to find Jesus.

As Judas leads the procession up the Mount of Olives, he feels sure that he knows where to find Jesus. During the past week, as Jesus and the apostles traveled back and forth between Bethany and Jerusalem, they often stopped in the garden of Gethsemane. But now it is night, and Jesus may be in the shadows of the olive trees in the garden. So how will the soldiers, who may not have seen Jesus before, be able to identify him? To help them, Judas will provide a sign. He says: "Whoever it is I kiss, he is the one; take him into custody, and lead him away under guard."—Mark 14:44.

Leading the crowd into the garden, Judas sees Jesus with his apostles and goes straight up to him. "Greetings, Rabbi!" Judas says, and he kisses Jesus very tenderly. "Fellow, for what purpose are you present?" Jesus responds. (Matthew 26:49, 50) Answering his own question, Jesus says: "Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48) But that is enough of his betrayer!

Jesus now steps into the light of the torches and lamps and asks: “Whom are you looking for?” From the mob comes the answer: “Jesus the Nazarene.” Jesus courageously says: “I am he.” (John 18:4, 5) Not knowing what to expect, the men fall to the ground.

Rather than seizing that moment to flee into the night, Jesus again asks whom they are seeking. When they again say, “Jesus the Nazarene,” he calmly continues: “I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.” Even at this crucial moment, Jesus recalls what he said earlier, that he would not lose a single one. (John 6:39; 17:12) Jesus has kept his faithful apostles and not one has been lost “except the son of destruction”—Judas. (John 18:7–9) Thus he now asks that his loyal followers be let go.

As the soldiers stand and move toward Jesus, the apostles realize what is happening. “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” they ask. (Luke 22:49) Before Jesus can reply, Peter wields one of the two swords that the apostles have at hand. He attacks Malchus, a slave of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

Jesus touches the ear of Malchus, healing the wound. He then teaches an important lesson, commanding Peter: “Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword.” Jesus is willing to be arrested, for he explains: “How would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must take place this way?” (Matthew 26:52, 54) He adds: “Should I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (John 18:11) Jesus agrees with God’s will for him, even to the point of dying.

Jesus asks the crowd: “Did you come out to arrest me with swords and clubs as against a robber? Day after day I used to sit in the temple teaching, and yet you did not take me into custody. But all of this has taken place for the writings of the prophets to be fulfilled.”—Matthew 26:55, 56. Jesus was arrested and taken away.

## QUESTIONS

- In what way have we betrayed Jesus over and over again?
- State instances or ways in which you can betray your friends.

## Week 6

### Topic: The Death and Burial of Christ

**Text: Luke 24:54-62**

#### **Peter Disowns Jesus**

*<sup>54</sup> Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. <sup>55</sup> And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. <sup>56</sup> A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."*

*<sup>57</sup> But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.*

*<sup>58</sup> A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."*

*"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.*

*<sup>59</sup> About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."*

*<sup>60</sup> Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup> The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." <sup>62</sup> And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

The death of Jesus was to fulfill the prophecy in the book of Isaiah 53:5-12

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgement, he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:5-12, NIV).

The burial of the Savior’s body conformed to **neither** Jewish nor Roman custom, in terms of how the remains of criminals were dispatched. Why was this the case?

The **immediate** explanation lies in the fact that Joseph was an influential Jew of “honorable estate” (Mk. 15:43), who “asked for the body of Jesus.” And Pilate, the Roman governor, for reasons not explained in the biblical text, “commanded it to be given up” (Mt. 27:58).

The **ultimate** explanation, however, is to be found in the fact that divine prophecy foretold that though Jehovah’s suffering Servant would be “assigned a grave with the wicked” (NIV), nonetheless he would be buried “with a rich man in his death” (Isa. 53:9). **Divine providence** clearly was at work in the fulfillment of this prophecy.

By means of His death, Jesus fulfilled prophecy and bought man’s freedom from slavery to sin. By means of His burial, Jesus removed any doubt that He had really died. By means of His resurrection, Jesus proved He had power over death. This assures us that if we truly trust and obey Jesus, He will one day raise us from the dead also. In fact the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest proof that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16-18; Romans 1:4). The death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord are the very foundation of the Gospel by which we are saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for our sins by dying on the cross. He went to the cross perfect and sinless. He did not deserve death. He was the only person that could make atonement for our sins. In order to make atonement, the sacrifice had to be without blemish – without sin. This is why we cannot atone for our own sins. We are born into sin. Jesus was not born into sin because God was his father.

We have to identify with his death by dying to sin. We die to sin, put off the old man, by repenting of our sins and turning away from sin. We can’t kill the sinful nature. What we put to death is the control the sinful nature has over us.

### **Assessment**

- Why was Jesus not buried according to the Jewish or Roman Custom?
- What was the true essence of Jesus death?

## Week 7

### The Trial of Jesus Matthew 26:57–68

**Text: Mark 14:55–65, Luke 22:63–71**

#### **The Guards Mock Jesus**

*<sup>63</sup> The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him.<sup>64</sup> They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?"<sup>65</sup> And they said many other insulting things to him.*

#### **Jesus Before Pilate and Herod**

*<sup>66</sup> At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. <sup>67</sup> "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."*

*Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me,<sup>68</sup> and if I asked you, you would not answer. <sup>69</sup> But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."*

*<sup>70</sup> They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"*

*He replied, "You say that I am."*

*<sup>71</sup> Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."*

The night of Jesus' arrest, He was brought before Annas, Caiaphas, and an assembly of religious leaders called the Sanhedrin (John 18:19–24; Matthew 26:57). After this He was taken before Pilate, the Roman Governor (John 18:28), sent off to Herod (Luke 23:7), and returned to Pilate (Luke 23:11–12), who finally sentenced Him to death.

There were six parts to Jesus' trial: three stages in a religious court and three stages before a Roman court. Jesus was tried before Annas, the former high priest; Caiaphas, the current high priest; and the Sanhedrin. He was charged in these "ecclesiastical" trials with blasphemy, claiming to be the Son of God, the Messiah.

The trials before Jewish authorities, the religious trials, showed the degree to which the Jewish leaders hated Him because they carelessly disregarded many of their own laws. There were several illegalities involved in these trials from the perspective of Jewish law:

(1) No trial was to be held during feast time.



(2) Each member of the court was to vote individually to convict or acquit, but Jesus was convicted by acclamation.

(3) If the death penalty was given, a night must pass before the sentence was carried out; however, only a few hours passed before Jesus was placed on the Cross.

(4) The Jews had no authority to execute anyone.

(5) No trial was to be held at night, but this trial was held before dawn.

(6) The accused was to be given counsel or representation, but Jesus had none.

(7) The accused was not to be asked self-incriminating questions, but Jesus was asked if He was the Christ.

### **The charges against Jesus:**

#### **A. Caiaphas' accusations:**

1. "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'
2. I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days
3. Tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. He has blasphemed Mt
4. "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? "You have heard the blasphemy Mk

#### **B. Council of elder's accusations:**

1. When it was day, the of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. "But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." Luke 22:66-71

The trials before the Roman authorities started with Pilate (John 18:23) after Jesus was beaten. The charges brought against Him were very different from the charges in

His religious trials. He was charged with inciting people to riot, forbidding the people to pay their taxes, and claiming to be King. Pilate found no reason to kill Jesus so he sent Him to Herod (Luke 23:7). Herod had Jesus ridiculed but, wanting to avoid the political liability, sent Jesus back to Pilate (Luke 23:11–12). This was the last trial as Pilate tried to appease the animosity of the Jews by having Jesus scourged. The Roman scourge was a terrible whipping designed to remove the flesh from the back of the one being punished. In a final effort to have Jesus released, Pilate offered the prisoner Barabbas to be crucified and Jesus released, but to no avail. The crowds called for Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified. Pilate granted their demand and surrendered Jesus to their will (Luke 23:25). The trials of Jesus represent the ultimate mockery of justice. Jesus, the most innocent man in the history of the world, was found guilty of crimes and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

### **Conclusion:**

1. The six trials of Jesus were a total miscarriage of justice that involved Jewish envy, political pandering, evil and pure cowardice.
2. Contrary to the popular view held by today's Jewish community, it was the pagan Romans who found Jesus innocent and the chosen race of Jews who crucified him out of envy and hard-hearted evil.
3. Pilate said as he washed his hands, "I am innocent of this man's blood" the Jews actually responded, "His blood be upon us and our children". So be it! And such is the gospel. We are all guilty of crucifying Jesus if we have committed even one sin which Jesus needed to shed his blood for to bring about forgiveness and the hope of eternal life in heaven!
4. The seventh and final trial of Jesus takes place in your heart right here, right now! Do you think he was innocent or guilty of sin? He died for you. Do you still crucify him with your actions and inactions? Think about it?

### **Assessment**

- List the charges against Jesus during His trial.
- State the parts to Jesus' trial

## Week 8

### Topic: The Crucifixion of Jesus

**Text: Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41**

The Crucifixion of Jesus – Mark 15:21-41

<sup>21</sup> A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. <sup>22</sup> They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). <sup>23</sup> Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the Jews.

<sup>27</sup> They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>[28]</sup> <sup>29</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!” <sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!” <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

<sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

<sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

<sup>36</sup> Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

<sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

<sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, <sup>[c]</sup> he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

<sup>40</sup> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, <sup>[d]</sup> and Salome. <sup>41</sup> In Galilee

*these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.*

The Jewish high priests and elders of the Sanhedrin accused Jesus of blasphemy, arriving at the decision to put him to death. But first they needed Rome to approve of their death sentence, so Jesus was taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea.

Although Pilate found him innocent, unable to find or even contrive a reason to condemn Jesus, he feared the crowds, letting them decide Jesus' fate. Stirred by the Jewish chief priests, the crowds declared, "Crucify him!"

As was common, Jesus was publicly scourged, or beaten, with a leather-thonged whip before his crucifixion. Tiny pieces of iron and bone chips were tied to the ends of each leather thong, causing deep cuts and painful bruises. He was mocked, struck in the head with a staff and spit on. A prickly crown of thorns was placed on his head and he was stripped naked. Too weak to carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it for him.

He was led to Golgotha where he would be crucified. As was the custom, before they nailed him to the cross, a mixture of vinegar, gall, and myrrh was offered. This drink was said to alleviate some of the suffering, but Jesus refused to drink it.

Stake-like nails were driven through his wrists and ankles, fastening him to the cross where he was crucified between two convicted criminals.

The inscription above his head tauntingly read, "The King of the Jews." Jesus hung on the cross for his final agonizing breaths, a period that lasted about six hours.

During that time, soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothing, while people passed by shouting insults and scoffing. From the cross, Jesus spoke to his mother Mary and the disciple John. He also cried out to his father, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"

At that point, darkness covered the land. A little later, as Jesus gave up his spirit, an earthquake shook the ground, ripping the Temple veil in two from top to bottom. Matthew's Gospel records, "The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life."

It was typical for Roman soldiers to show mercy by breaking the criminal's legs, thus causing death to come more quickly. But this night only the thieves had their legs broken, for when the soldiers came to Jesus, they found him already dead. Instead, they pierced his side. Before sunset, Jesus was taken down by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and laid in Joseph's tomb according to Jewish tradition.

- Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:43-52).

- Jesus endured six trials – three by Jewish leaders and three by the Romans (John 18:12-14, Mark 14:53-65, Mark 15:1a, Mark 15: 1b-5, Luke 23:6-12, Mark 15:6-15). Jesus survived painful beating, whipping, and mocking (Mark 15:16-20).
- Pilate tried to compromise with the religious leaders by having Jesus beaten, but this act didn't satisfy them. Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified (Mark 15:6-15).
- Jesus was mocked by the soldiers as they dressed Him in a purple robe and a crown of thorns (John 19:1-3).
- Jesus was crucified on Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull (Mark 15:22). The sky turned dark for three hours (Mark 15:33).
- Jesus cried, "Father! Into your hands I commit my spirit!" and He died (Luke 23:46).

## **POINTS OF INTEREST FROM THE STORY**

- Christian theology teaches that the death of Jesus Christ provided the perfect atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, thus making the crucifix, or cross, one of the defining symbols of Christianity.
- Although both Roman and Jewish leaders could be implicated in the sentencing and death of Jesus Christ, he himself said of his life, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (John 10:18 NIV).
- The curtain or veil of the Temple separated the Holy of Holies (inhabited by the presence of God) from the rest of the Temple. Only the high priest could enter there once a year, with the sacrificial offering for the sins of all the people. When Christ died and the curtain was torn from top to bottom, this symbolized the destruction of the barrier between God and man. The way was opened up through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. His death provided the complete sacrifice for sin so that now all people, through Christ, can approach the throne of grace.

## **Assessment**

- Mention the significant events on the account of the crucifixion of Jesus

## Week 9

### Topic: The Burial of Jesus Christ

**Text: Matthew 27:56-66, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 24:50-56**

The Burial of Jesus – Mark 15:42-47

<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

#### Who were the men who buried Jesus?

- Joseph, probably born in a city in Judea call Ramathaim; he was a rich, influential man, a member of the Sanhedrin. He is described as 'looking for the Kingdom of God', and perhaps believed he had found it in Jesus. He may have been absent from the hastily-summoned council that condemned Jesus, or his objection to the sentence of death may have been over-ridden. Or he may even have lacked the courage to speak up in Jesus' defense – Mark's gospel says Joseph had to 'gather up his courage' to ask for Jesus' body. It was risky for him to defend or protect Jesus; it could have serious consequences for advancement in his social, religious and political life.
- Nicodemus brought spices for the burial, powdered myrrh and aloes, about 70lbs in modern weight, a phenomenal amount. There is no explanation as to why he gave so much. But John tells us Nicodemus came to hear Jesus under cover of darkness, as if he were afraid; perhaps he was now trying to make up for this fearfulness.

Here were two highly placed men of authentic Jewish faith who were able to respond to Jesus' teaching.

On the Friday afternoon that Jesus died, not all of the Jewish leaders were happy to see Him dead. One of them was a rich man named Joseph, from the town of Arimathea; he had been a secret disciple of Jesus and had not helped plan his death.

He went to the governor Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly so he called for a soldier to ask if Jesus was already dead. When he found out that He was dead, he gave orders for the body of Jesus to be given to Joseph. Another Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who also believe in Jesus, brought spices to bury with the body of Jesus. They took the body of Jesus down from the cross and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth together with the spices, for this is the way that Jews buried people.

Jesus was buried according to the Jewish tradition. This means that the body was washed before it was wrapped in a simple shroud made of fine linen, normally a task performed by the women relatives of the deceased. There were prescribed psalms and prayers said at this time. The body was then placed on **a stone shelf within the tomb**. Jesus' burial was quickly done. Everything had to be finished in the sort period remaining before sundown – all the people involved were strict Jews, carefully observant of the Sabbath.

Joseph had a tomb in a garden near where Jesus was crucified, so they took the body there. The tomb was a grave that looked like a cave; it had been cut in the side of a rock cliff. They put his body in the tomb and rolled a giant rock against the doorway to close it off. The women who had come from Galilee followed them to the tomb and watched them bury the body. Then they went home and started preparing spices and ointments to put with the body. The next day was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and they rested that day like the Law of Moses commanded.

But on that same Saturday the Jewish leaders went to Pilate. They told him, "Sir, we remember that while that liar was still alive He said, 'After three days I will rise to life.' So, command for the tomb to be guarded well until after three days. His disciples might come and steal His body and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' Then that lie will be even worse than before." Pilate said, "Take some soldiers and go guard the tomb the best way you know." So they went to the tomb and guarded it by putting a wax seal on the rock covering the doorway and leaving the soldiers to stand watch.

So Jesus was dead, buried, and His body guarded. His enemies thought that this was the end. But they were wrong; it was only the beginning. We number our years from the time of Jesus because of what happened the next day.

### **Assessment**

- What were the roles of the men involved in the burial of Jesus?
- What complaints did the Jewish leaders present to Pilate?

# Week 10

## Topic: The Great Commission

**Text: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 15:14-15**

### **The Great Commission – Matthew 28:16-20**

*<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The Great Commission is one of the most significant passages in the Holy Bible. First, it's the last recorded personal instruction given by Jesus to His disciples. Second, it's a special calling from Jesus Christ to all His followers to take specific action while on this earth. The Great Commission instructs us to make disciples while we are going throughout the world and while we are going about our daily activities. How are we to make disciples? By baptizing them and teaching them all that Jesus commanded. “Make disciples” is the command of the Great Commission. “As you are going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” are the means by which we fulfill the command to “make disciples.”

The Great Commission is the end of a Gospel and the beginning of faith in action for all Christians. This command from Jesus is significant because it's a personal instruction for Christians to have a profound faith in Jesus Christ as indicated in verse 18. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This is an incredibly powerful statement which demands faith in Jesus Christ, validating His power in the lives of Christians and their commitment to Him. This verse acts as a clear claim to Christ's omnipotence, and therefore His deity. If Christians do not believe this statement, complete faith does not exist. Jesus is very clear about His authority in the world — it is complete and total from the beginning of time itself (John 1:1-3).

In verse 19, Jesus gives His believers specific directions to follow after they have affirmed their faith. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus calls all His followers to act and share the Good News of salvation throughout the world. People hear this calling and travel each year on missionary trips throughout the



earth, spreading the word of Jesus Christ. Many Christians have made incredible sacrifices, traveling to remote regions of the world beyond the civilized cities into jungles and deserts. Mission fields can also be very close to home. It could be a neighbor who has not heard the Good News, or a poverty stricken area just down the road where people can't afford Bibles. There are so many Christians in the world that are perishing and we have been instructed to GO. It is the responsibility of YOU and I to reach out to the world at large according to Acts 1:8.

The Great Commission spells out the central purpose for all believers. After salvation, our lives belong to Jesus Christ who died to purchase our freedom from sin and death. He redeemed us so that we might become useful in his Kingdom.

We don't have to strive to fulfill the Great Commission. Remember, Christ promised that he himself would always be with us. Both his presence and his authority will accompany us as we carry out his disciple-making mission.

### **Assessment**

- Why is the great commission considered one of the most significant passages in the Holy Bible?

## **Week 11**

### **Topic: Revision and Examination**

Teachers are expected to do a revision of all topics from Week 2 to Week 10. A summary of all lesson notes should be done. Questions should be prepared for the students as take home assignments to work on. The answers should be discussed among the students and with the Teachers.