

Notes on

The Good Message, according to Lukas

Part One

Authorship and Date Issues:

The author of this treatise is the same as the author of *Actions of the Envoys*. After making this observation, we now search to see whether or not the traditional identification is correct. The majority view is that the various "we" passages (much of parts three through five in *Actions of the Envoys*) indicate that the author was one of Paulus' companions. If we follow this train of thought, a comparison with Paulus' letters (e.g., Col 4:14; Phm 24; 2 Tim 4:10f.) reveals that there is one person mentioned as a member of Paulus' party who is not mentioned in the *Actions*: Lukas the "beloved physician." Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that Lukas was the author both of this work and of the account giving a defense of the message which follows this one (Acts 1:1).

If we acknowledge Lukas as the author of the two historical accounts, we must still ask a question as to the date of composition. Some theorize that Lukas wrote this work quite late, c. 85 CE. However, since both books (Lukas and the *Actions*) refer to the destruction of the temple and siege of Jerusalem in such a way that it is evident that the First Revolt had not yet begun, it seems more likely then that the books were written prior to the beginning of the war in 66 CE.

Furthermore, the *Actions* leave us no account of the final hearing of Paulus, appearing to stop at a point where his vindication was believed to be imminent. Also, there is no mention of persecution by the Romans, which began under Nero after the Great Fire of Rome. With the absence of the Great Fire -- for which the author was likely an eyewitness -- it is more tenable then that the *Actions* were written just as the events detailed within them terminate, with the author awaiting Paulus' appearance before Nero c. 63-64 CE. Since the *Actions* were written after this account of Jesus' life, no date later than c. 63 CE makes sense for the work. However, the introduction to the *Actions* makes it appear as though that work was not long behind this one. Considering the research done for each work, we place the date of composition for Lukas at c. 60-63 CE.

Theory of Composition

Comparison to the so-called "fourth" account of Jesus' life -- that written by Johannes -- reveals that the two writings share a common timeline, something that is not true for Lukas and Markus or Lukas and Matthaiah. With Johannes having been written c. 40 CE or perhaps even earlier (see the [Commentary on Johannes](#)), and with Lukas claim that he used eyewitness accounts in composing this work (see the Preface, below), we theorize that Lukas used Johannes as one of his sources. Matthaiah was certainly one of his other sources, since Lukas and Matthaiah mention events not contained in Markus, and since Matthaiah claims to be a primary source. It is

not disputed, though, that Lukas made use of other sources, for Lukas includes a substantial section of material that is not found in any other source. Here we refer especially to several of Jesus' analogies.

While Lukas' account is secondary, Lukas himself associated with Paulus and received information from primary sources -- people who had known Jesus. Furthermore, Lukas' presentation of the material indicates that he was making an effort to compile a scholarly and accurate narrative. Consequently, more weight should be attached to an account such as Lukas' than to a wholly secondary account of Jesus' life. In fact, although Johannes' account is chronological, it is never explicitly stated, and so Lukas' is the only account about which we are certain is chronological.

Structure

The traditional chapter divisions are disruptive if not annoying. The work is divided into sixty short sections which are separated into four parts. These parts begin with the nativity accounts; the sending of the Twelve; the end of signs; and the final journey to Jerusalem.

Preface

Whereas many have undertaken to prepare a narrative about those things that have been fully established among us, just as those people who became from the beginning eyewitnesses and assistants of the message delivered them to us, it seemed good also to me (who have accurately traced out all of it from the top) to write those things to you in order, Excellent Theophilus, so that you would know the certainty of the sayings about which you have been instructed.

The author begins by addressing a person called "Theophilus." Since "Theophilus" means "lover" (or friend) "of God," the name may be the author's means of indicating that the book belongs to anyone who loves God. On the other hand, there may simply have been a recipient with that name.

The purpose of the treatise is far more clear. The author sets out to prove his message, a message that was handed to him by noteworthy and trustworthy people, including eyewitnesses. Based on this carefully sketched out testimony, the reader -- who is already a believer -- will become more sure of the veracity of the message.

PART ONE

I

1:5 *It happened in the days of Herod, King of Judea, that there was a high priest named Zechariah, from the course of Abijah. And his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. Now they were both just in the presence of God, walking as blameless people in all the precepts and ritual acts of Yahweh. And there was no child for them, because Elisabeth was barren, and both of them were advanced in their days.*

Having indicated a purpose to write his account in chronological order, the author sets the stage for the earliest scenes in the book, linking the events not only to one another but also to common secular history, such as might likely be known by his reader.

Herod the king was otherwise known as "Herod the Great." The author places the scene in the times of Herod, which ended with his death in about 4 BCE, having become King in 39 BCE. After being appointed to power, Herod married into the priestly family and had his chief opponent executed. Herod had cities built in honor of Julius Caesar's successor, Octavian (who was renamed Caesar Augustus). Augustus in turn proclaimed Herod his friend and expanded Herod's sphere of influence.

But Herod was ruthless, even murdering his wife when he suspected her of treachery. As the temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed under his rule, Herod ordered a golden eagle placed there -- a symbol of Rome. When the Jewish people resisted, he ordered some of them executed. Near the end of his rule, he appears to have gone mad, ordering even his sons executed. Among the days of Herod were dark times for the Jewish people, and the reader was expected to recall those times.

Now, concerning the statement about Zechariah's lineage, Lukas has few words to say -- but they say a lot. The priests had been divided originally into twenty-four groups, or courses (1Chr 24:4), according to the grandchildren of Aaron. The course of Abijah (1Chr 24:8) was one of these divisions. Thus, the reader learns that Zechariah was a priest who traced his lineage back to Aaron through Aaron's grandson, Abijah. Some commentators point to the "Abijah" that is listed in Nehemiah as having returned to Israel from the Babylonian dispersion, but Lukas' language, including his mention that it was Zechariah's week to offer incense, clearly mean that the "Abijah" in question was Aaron's grandson. Zechariah's claim to priesthood was strong, but also we read that his wife was one of Aaron's descendants also, meaning that their children would be part of the priestly lineage on both sides of their parentage.

Unfortunately, Zechariah and Elisabeth had no children. This was not a punishment for wrongdoing (as some people might have been tempted to believe), but to the contrary, everyone recognized that they followed the prescribed teachings flawlessly as they understood them. Yet still they had been unable to have children, even though the two were becoming old. The story is reminiscent of that of Abram and Sarai, who had been unable to have children so that God would do something great for the Jewish people in bringing about a covenant through Isaac and Jacob.

Now during the time when he was performing the sacred rites, during the time when his course was arranging the duties before God (according to the custom of the priesthood), it happened that it fell to him to enter into Yahweh's temple to burn incense. And all the crowd of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense burning.

1 Chronicles 31:2 indicates that Hezekiah had established that the courses of the priesthood would serve at certain times by burning incense, exactly as Zechariah is described as doing. The specifications for burning incense had been specified in Exodus 30. And so we learn that it was Zechariah's time to burn incense, as people were outside offering prayer to God. Thus, the occasion was as solemn as possible.

Now a messenger of Yahweh appeared to him, standing at the right side of the incense brazier. And when Zechariah noticed him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the messenger said to him,

"Don't be afraid, Zechariah, because your supplication has been heard, and your wife Elisabeth will give birth to your son, and you will call his name John. And he will be a joy to you and a gladdening, and many will rejoice at his birth."

The appearance of God's messenger is significant, and Lukas uses the traditional language to describe that appearance, indicating the detail of his research. The incense brazier stood next to the altar where the sacrifices were made, and so the appearance of the messenger in this particular place had the greatest possible significance to the Jewish people.

Here we learn for the first time that Zechariah and his wife had been praying that they would be able to have children together, but so far they had received no answer one way or the other. Yet their child would be in direct response to their prayers, just as Abram had been heard at age 99. In Abram's case, it had been he whom God had (re)named. Here, though, God had given a name not for Zechariah but for his son. That name, Yohanan, signified "Yahweh's gift," and it was necessary for Zechariah to give his son that name in order to properly honor God.

"Many will rejoice" may be parallel to Abraham's being a "father of many," but this is unlikely, and the parallel appears to shift at this point, for John's own parallel is not to Isaac but to another favored ancestor. The whole scene may be intended to remind of Mal 3:1-2, wherein Yahweh's messenger appears in the temple to announce an impending judgment upon all Israel.

"For he will be great in Yahweh's presence, "and he will by no means drink wine and strong drink," and he will be filled with holy breath while still new from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of Israel's sons to Yahweh their God."

In addition to having both his parents belong to the priestly lineage, this child called John would necessarily be a Nazirite. The citation is from Numbers 6, where the vows specify that no form of fermented beverage may be consumed by the Nazirite. In addition, no Nazirite may ever cut his hair or approach a corpse. Normally, a Nazirite vow was temporary, but John's would be permanent, lasting his whole life. The term "Nazirite" denotes a "separated one," and John's life would be separated for God.

The expression "filled with holy breath" means that God would speak to and through John. The hyperbole claims that this would happen from the time he was a baby. In the typical idiom of the day, this meant that his whole life's service would be from God. His role, to "turn ...Israel's sons to Yahweh," is almost identical to the wording in Mal 4:6 and, in fact, evokes a quotation from that passage:

"And he will come first in his presence, with Elijah's spirit and power, to "turn the hearts of the fathers to children" and to turn the unpersuaded with the intellect of the just, to make ready for Yahweh a prepared people."

"He will come first" indicates that John's work would precede someone else's. In the context of the quote from Malachi, that someone is the Anointed One. The function of the Elijah figure, identified with John, is to bring people back to Yahweh God, teaching love for one another. According to Malachi, all of this takes place not long before a day of judgment on Israel, "the great and majestic day of Yahweh" (Mal 4:5). Such a judgment did take place in 66-73 CE, when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and Israel's status as a nation removed.

John's function was to prepare God's people for what was to come, so that he might persuade some to follow the Messianic teachings. Those who did so would be prepared for the coming judgment, themselves escaping punishment.

18 And Zechariah said to the messenger, "By what will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in her days." And the messenger answered, saying to him, "I am Gabriel, the one who has attended in God's presence and who was sent forth to speak to you and to announce these things to you as a good message. And look, you will be mute and unable to speak until the day these things happen, because you have not trusted my sayings, which will be fulfilled in their season."

That the messenger was Gabriel indicates that a time of judgment was near, for it had been Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21) who had forecast the desolation of the temple under Antiochus IV. Gabriel attended (Dan 8:15) in God's presence, indicating favor with God and closeness of relationship. Therefore, his message was not to be doubted. Still, Zechariah was unsure, and so Gabriel called upon God's power to strike the man mute. His distrust would be revealed to the people around him, and this sign would not subside until the birth of his son.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was spending so much time in the temple. Now when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he was signaling to them, and he continued to be mute. And it happened that he returned into his house, as the days of his religious service were fulfilled.

Zechariah went home mute, so that everyone knew that something with divine significance had happened to him.

Now after these days, Elisabeth his wife conceived, and she hid herself for five months, saying that "Yahweh has done this for me, in the days when he looked on me to remove my reproach among people."

If the order of service for the priests was the order given by the Chronicler, it is possible that Zechariah received his prophecy in about June, with Elisabeth conceiving John in perhaps early July.

It was common to regard a woman who was unable to have children with considerable degree of disrespect, and so Elisabeth rejoiced that her "reproach" was being removed. Now she would no longer be seen as being out of favor with God. "She hid herself" probably means that she disguised her pregnancy. One possible reason for this is her own uncertainty that she was really

pregnant. Another possibility is that the couple had tried several times to have children, with each resulting in a stillbirth. Another rationale is that it might have been the case that it was Zechariah who was impotent; if Elisabeth conceived, people might think that she had been sleeping with another man. Either way, Zechariah and Elisabeth were no longer "barren," and by the end of five months it became clear that she was going to give birth.

II

26 Now in the sixth month, the messenger Gabriel was sent forth from God into a city of Galilaiah whose name was Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Yosef from the house of David. And the name of the virgin was Miriam. And coming to her, he said, "Hello, favored one. The Lord is with you." But she was disturbed by the message and was reasoning what this greeting might be. And the messenger said to her, "Don't be afraid, Miriam, for you have found favor with God. And look, you will conceive in your abdomen, and will give birth to a son. And you will call his name Jesus ((Yeshua)). He will be great and will be called a son of the Highest One, and Yahweh God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob for the ages, and his kingdom will be unending."

The month is now December, and Gabriel returns, this time to visit Elisabeth's close relative. The author's introduction leaves her name as incidental. The woman lived in a certain town called Nazareth. She was not yet married, although she was engaged to a man named Yosef. Hence, she was still a virgin. This man Yosef belonged to the priestly lineage, and so their children would belong to the priestly lineage (as lineage was regarded). It is likely that Miriam was named after Moses' sister, who, like Moses, was a prophet.

As with Elisabeth, God had a plan for Miriam to give birth through miraculous means. While Elisabeth had been unable to have children, in Miriam's case she had never made love to any man, making it impossible for her to become pregnant. Yet God sent a messenger to Miriam to inform her that the impossible was going to happen.

This son, too, was to have a special name, this time indicating his role. His name was to be Yeshua, which translates to "Yahweh is salvation." The promised Anointed One was to bring salvation to the Israelite peoples. The term "Messiah" is not used here, but another messianic term, "God's son," appears. Jesus would be God's son -- that is, the Anointed One -- but also he would have no literal father other than God. The promise of the Davidic reign is, of course, Messianic as well. Miriam should have no doubt that Gabriel was informing her that she would give birth to the Messiah.

Now Miriam said to the messenger, "How will this be, since I have not slept with a man?" And the messenger answered, saying to her, "Holy breath will come upon you, and power of the Highest One will overshadow you. And so, the one who is born, a holy child, will be called God's son."

It is here that the second significance of the term "God's son" is revealed to Miriam (and to Lukas' readers). Anyone who follows God from the heart might genuinely be called God's son, but the term was also an expression for "Messiah." It is used that way by all four authors of

Jesus' life story. Yet the second significance did not escape Miriam -- that the term also signified God's parentage.

The author does not quote the famous prediction from Isaiah, "Look, a virgin will conceive..." (Isa 7:14f.), but the passage was almost certainly in the author's mind. That passage predicts that the Anointed One would come as a sign that God was on Israel's side, thus being called "God is with us" (Imma-nu-El). Not everyone took this as a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, but by his inclusion of the infancy narrative, our author appears to have applied the passage to Jesus.

"And look at your relative Elisabeth. She has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month for her, who is called barren. Because no declaration from God will be impossible."

Gabriel had another miraculous birth to which he could point, for Elisabeth had been granted a similar impossible birth. By the sixth month, it would be clear to Miriam (should she choose to visit) that Elisabeth was indeed pregnant. Therefore, Miriam should come to realize that nothing was impossible -- not even birth to a virgin.

The relationship between Elisabeth and Miriam is not specified here. Many believe that they were sisters; however, that term is not used here, and the difference in their ages may have been as much as 50 years. Elisabeth may have been an aunt to Miriam, or another relative.

Now Miriam said, "Look at Yahweh's slave. Let it happen to me according to your declaration." And the messenger went away from her.

Whereas Zechariah had disbelieved, Miriam had accepted the testimony of Gabriel and subjected herself to what God wanted for her. In his narrative, Lukas occasionally parallels men and women, and this appears to be the first such parallel. Zechariah the male priest was doubtful, but Miriam the common woman believed when spoken to by Gabriel about a miraculous birth.

39 *Now Miriam got up in those days and went into the mountains with haste, into a city of Judah. And she entered into Zechariah's house and greeted Elisabeth. And it happened that as Elisabeth heard Miriam's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb and holy breath came upon Elisabeth, and she sounded out with a loud cry, saying, "You are praised among women! And the fruit of your womb is praised! And from where is this happening to me, that my Lord's mother should come to me? For, look! As the sound of your greeting happened in my ears, the baby in my womb leaped in gladness! And blessed is the one who trusted that there will be a completion of the things that were spoken to her by Yahweh!"*

Miriam's attitude at hearing the miracle that had happened to Elisabeth was one of great celebration. She did not go to Zechariah's home doubting what had happened, but she rather rejoiced at learning that Elisabeth had received a child with the intervention of God.

The soon-to-be prophet, yet unborn John, leaped in his mother's womb as Miriam approached -- now bearing baby Jesus in her own abdomen. Elisabeth received inspiration from God and spoke words of praise. Elisabeth realized that Miriam was carrying the Anointed One, for she referred to her relative as "my Lord's mother." It is possible that this realization came from knowing that

her own son would be a prophet, so that John's reaction to the proximity of Jesus told her that Jesus must be the Anointed. At any rate, she had had prior communication with Miriam about Jesus, because Elisabeth mentions that God had spoken to Miriam about her child's birth.

And Miriam said, "My soul magnifies Yahweh, and my spirit has rejoiced at God my savior! Because he looked upon the humility of his slave. For look, from now, all generations will call me blessed because the powerful one did great things for me."

Miriam's words of praise at learning of her upcoming miraculous delivery are strongly reminiscent of those of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1ff.) after Yahweh God had blessed her by allowing her to conceive Samuel (1 Sam 1:20). The acknowledgement of God as savior and the initial expression of joy is reminiscent of 1 Sam 2:1, and the expression of her own humility appears to parallel 1 Sam 1:11, but the statement about blessing the generations is unique to the Messiah's mother.

"And holy is his name! And his mercy is for generations and generations of those who fear him! He has made strength with his arm. He has scattered those who are highminded in the attitudes of their hearts. He has cast down the powers from thrones and has lifted up the humble. He fills the hungry people with good things and he sends away the wealthy people empty. Remembering mercy, he grants things to Israel his child, just as he said to our ancestors, 'To Abraham and his seed for the age.'"

Here again the parallels with Hannah and other Hebrew Bible personages continue. 1 Sam 2:2 reads "There is no one as holy as Yahweh," and here we read a praise to God's holiness. Miriam's citation about God's mercy appears to come from Psa 103:17, where the wording is virtually identical, although the granting of the ten "words" on Sinai (Ex 20:5-6).

God's ability to strike down the wealthy and raise up the humble is mentioned throughout the Hebrew Bible, but 1 Sam 2:7-8 is probably the proper parallel. Miriam's words of praise are clearly directed toward a recognition of Yahweh's greater plan and purpose. While she remembers the wonderful deeds of God among his people, she also calls to mind his purpose in sending an anointed one. In fact, her recollection of the blessing of Abraham (Gen 17:7; 18:8) appears to drop in the wording of 2 Sam 22:51, *"He gives great triumphs to his king and shows mercy to his anointed -- to David and his seed for the age."* That oracle of David identifies his own children as blessed, and Miriam may have interpreted the passage in a Messianic context, with her son being a descendent of David (Abraham) who would bless Israel.

Now Miriam remained with her for three months, and then she returned into her house.

Again the author provides us with as accurate a time frame as he is able. Miriam stayed with her relative, Elisabeth, for the remainder of Elisabeth's pregnancy with John.

57 *Now Elisabeth's time of childbearing was fulfilled, and she gave birth to a son. And those who lived nearby and her relatives heard that Yahweh had multiplied his mercy towards her, and they rejoiced with her.*

As Elisabeth finally did give birth, her relatives were pleased that God had been loving and merciful toward her. This again coincides with the belief that it was considered shameful (or even a curse) for a married woman to not bear children.

And it happened that during the eighth day they came to have the boy circumcised, and they were calling him after the name of his father, Zechariah. And his mother answered him, saying, "No. On the contrary, he will be called John." And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." Now they motioned to his father as to what he would want him to be called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote, saying, "His name is John." And they all wondered. Now his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue was freed, and he spoke, praising God.

Jewish male children are traditionally circumcised on their eighth day of life, just as Isaak had been circumcised on his eighth day (Gen 21:4), as God had directed (Gen 17:12). Although in previous generations one might acquire a name at or before the time of birth, by the time of Zechariah it had become common to name a male child on the day of his circumcision. Christian groups that practice infant baptism carry on this same tradition, replacing circumcision with baptism.

Since Zechariah was mute, his family discussed what to name his child, with Elisabeth insisting that he be called John (Yohanan). The family protested, wanting her to choose the name of a prominent family member. Thinking that Zechariah would side with them, they asked for him to assist them. It was stunning enough when he wrote on the tablet that his son should be called John, but even more stunning was the fact that his voice returned immediately upon following the messenger's instruction to name the child John.

And fear happened upon all those who lived near them, and these declarations were discussed in the whole mountainous region of Judea. And all those who heard put these things in their hearts, saying, "Whatever will this boy be?" For also, Yahweh's hand was with him.

The result of Zechariah's pronouncement and healing was predictable: everyone began talking about these things and about the miracle surrounding John's birth. Some time passes here, but we do not know how much, for the people also began to notice that the boy was enjoying God's favor. This observation on the part of Zechariah's associates and townspeople prompts a pronouncement from him:

And Zechariah his father was filled with holy breath, and he prophesied, saying, "Praiseworthy is Yahweh, the God of Israel, because he has visited and has made redemption for his people. And he has raised up a horn of salvation for us, in his servant-boy David's house (just as he said through the mouth of the holy ones from the age of his prophets): a salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all those who hate us, to do mercy with our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant--an oath that he swore to Abraham our ancestor--to give us to fearlessly do religious service for him in godliness and right in his presence for all of our days, rescuing us out of the hand of our enemies.

And so it is Zechariah who receives the first prophesy in modern times about the coming of the Anointed One. Lukas makes sure that his readers realize that Zechariah was inspired ("filled with holy breath") when he spoke this utterance because of its importance. The people's observations about his son, John, were only the beginning of something wonderful that God was planning to accomplish.

The praise that "God has visited his people" appears to stem from Ex 4:31, for just as the people had realized that God was active when they had observed Aaron and Moses performing signs, so also Zechariah observes that the people realized that Yahweh God had gifted his son for a reason. In this case, that reason was to prepare for the coming Anointed One.

A "horn of salvation" (see 2 Sam 22:3) was a symbol of God's intervention on behalf of the people. Here, that intervention was to come in the form of a Davidic figure, the Messiah. After explicitly mentioning the prophecies about this Anointed One, Zechariah continues in the traditional language of the Hebrew Bible, saying that in sending the Messiah God would bring vindication and mercy. The oath sworn to Abraham is the remembrance of the covenant that he made with his people -- that whoever followed him (among Abraham's descendents) would be taken care of. The rest of the language is also familiar, but "doing religious service" to God would take on a new significance in the teachings of the Anointed One.

"Now also child, you will be called a prophet of the Highest One. For you will go ahead in Yahweh's presence to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people with forgiveness of their sins, on account of our God's deep feelings of mercy, by which he has visited us, a dawn from on high, to shine on those who are sitting in darkness and in death's shadow, to direct our feet into a way of peace."

On behalf of his own son, Zechariah predicts that John would be a prophet, but even more so, that he would be a fulfillment of Isa 40:3, preparing God's path in advent of the coming of the Messiah. This oracle also establishes the "mission" of John: to bring people around to God's way of thinking, for John would find that many people preferred their religious practices to God's spiritual principles. But God was being merciful in sending John to help direct the people toward peace with God.

Absent but implicit here is what negative things would happen to those who did not accept God's prophets and teachings. Lukas will reveal these things later.

Now the child grew and became strong of spirit, and he was in the deserts until the day of his presentation to Israel.

John was basically raised outside of the reach of traditional Priestly Judaism. As we saw earlier, he was brought up as a Nazirite, separated to do God's work. The author leaves us with John's maturation and growing spiritual strength. After introducing us to the young Jesus, he will bring the two together.

2:1 *Now it happened in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to inscribe all the empire. This inscription was the first one that happened while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all people went to be inscribed, each one into his own city. Now also, on account of his being of the house and family of David, Joseph went up from Galilaiah from the city of Nazareth into Judea into the city of David called Beth-Lehem, to be inscribed with Miriam his fiancée, who was pregnant.*

The annals of Rome do not inform us in detail about the governorships of Quirinius (Kirenus, Cyrenius); however, we know by comparing with both Josephus (*Antiquities*, 18, I, 1) and with certain inscriptions -- including one found at Tiber (the *Lapis Tiburtinus*) and analyzed by William Ramsey in 1912 -- that Quirinius governed the region twice. The inscription clearly records that someone (alas, unnamed, but fitting Quirinius' description) had governed the region of Syria as imperial legate twice. Quirinius was chosen as legate the first time under the civil governance of other men, including Sentius Saturninus, who reigned from 8 BCE to 6 BCE. This is supported by testimony by Justin Martyr, who said that Quirinius had been a legate but not a full governor of the region when Jesus was born, and also by Tertullian, who said that Saturninus had been governor over the region when the census depicted here was held. The first reign of Quirinius began in 10 BCE and lasted at least until sometime between 7 and 2 BCE, while the second reign began c. 6 CE and included a second census.

Census registrations for military service were not rare, and despite the use of the word "taxed" in some translations it does not appear that this was a census taken for the purpose of taxation. One did not have to be a Roman citizen in order to be eligible for military service, and so such a census would have applied to Miriam's husband, Yosef. One source suggests that such inscriptions were held at least once every 14 years, although the timing was not always completely accurate. If the censuses had been held on time, then the census mentioned here was taken in or around 8-7 BCE, but political tensions may have caused the census to be taken later, perhaps 6-5 BCE. Therefore, we can narrow down the year of Jesus' birth somewhat. The exact timing seems to have been unimportant to early Christians.

The habit of sending people back to their hometowns for registration is also mentioned in Roman records, and since the Davidic line emerged through Beth-Lehem, Yosef and Miriam would have returned there from Nazareth to be registered.

Under Jewish custom, the sexual act created a marital union between husband and wife. Although two fiances could legally call one another "wife" and "husband," and although the Torah recognized the relationship as binding (see, for example, Dt 22:23f.), the distinction between an engaged couple and a married couple was the act of sexual union. Lukas points out with his terminology that Yosef and Miriam were still engaged, not married, although she was pregnant. That is, he insists that the child was neither illegitimate (for which the penalty was death) nor Yosef's (for the couple would have been married).

Now it happened while they were there that her days of bearing the child were fulfilled, and she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in the stall, since there was no place for them in the guest room.

We do not know how long the trip took, nor are we told how long Yosef and Miriam remained in Beth-Lehem prior to the time of her delivery, although this time must have been short. It seems probable that they traveled while Miriam was not in dread danger of miscarriage, but that the return trip might likely have caused harm. It was not easy to secure room for the entire stay in Beth-Lehem, for so many people had been affected by the same decree from Caesar. Therefore, on the night that Jesus was born, there were no lodging rooms available for Miriam and Yosef; consequently, they accepted from the inn a stall to sleep in. It was there that Miriam gave birth to the promised son.

And there were shepherds in this countryside who stayed in the fields and who were keeping night watches over their flock. And a messenger of Yahweh stood near them, and Yahweh's glory shone around them, and they feared with great fear. And the messenger said to them, "Don't be afraid. For, look, I am announcing to you a good message of great generosity, which will be for all the people. Because today a savior is born to you, who is an Anointed Lord, in David's city. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a stall."

The probable month is now September, and perhaps it is fitting that the exact date has been lost to us, since the Christian way of life as explained by Jesus and Paul did not include the ritual celebration of Jesus' birthday but regarded all days equally.

The shepherds were still watching their flocks out in the field at night, an activity that was discontinued in the wet months. *Clarke's Commentary* reports that the sheep were kept outside at night during the Summer months only, with the purpose of their watch being to protect the sheep from bandits and predators.

On this particular evening, God's messenger appeared to them, glowing brightly. The message announced by this messenger is the Messianic message, although the details of its content are not yet given. The message was to be announced fully through a savior, the Anointed Lord, who is a descendent of David. The shepherds would recognize that this announcement was telling them that the Messiah was here. David himself had been a shepherd (as were many early patriarchs), and so it is appropriate that God would announce his message to them. However, shepherds were not considered great in Israel, and for the coming of a king it was socially inappropriate to announce such a thing to shepherds.

The shepherds were told exactly how to locate the newborn who would be the Anointed One.

And suddenly it happened that a crowd of the heavenly host was with the messenger, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest places, and on earth peace among people of good will."

The coming of the Anointed One and the important messianic message were so important that many of God's messengers appeared in order to praise him. Their words of praise remind us of the psalms (see, for example, Psa 57:5). In making this praise, they announce that the coming message brings both glory to God and peace among people -- not among all people but among those who will turn themselves to him and accept the spiritual teachings of his Anointed One.

On a textual level, later Coptic manuscripts, changes to some Greek manuscripts, and many later Greek manuscripts read εὐδοκία (good will) instead of εὐδοκίας (of good will) at the end of the messengers' statement. Therefore, translations made prior to the discovery and textual analysis of certain earlier Greek manuscripts read "good will among people" or some similar thing.

And it happened as the messengers were going into heaven, the people -- the shepherds -- also said to one another, "We should surely go as far as Beth-Lehem and see this declaration which has been done, which Yahweh has made known to us." And they hurried and went, and they found both Miriam and Yosef, and the baby lying in the stall. Now after noticing these things, they made known concerning the declaration that had been told to them about this child. And all those who heard wondered about the things that were spoken to them by the shepherds. But Miriam preserved all of these declarations, tossing them together in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God about all that they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

The shepherds went to the place pointed out to them by the messenger, and they became witnesses to the arrival of the Anointed One. At this point, Lukas calls Jesus simply "the baby," since he had not been named by custom at his circumcision.

As the shepherds returned to their flock, they announced the coming of the Anointed One, as it had been told to them by the messenger. As for Miriam, she remembered the things that the shepherds told her and took those things as confirmation that her son was indeed the Messiah.

IV

21 *And when eight days were fulfilled, it was the time to circumcise him. And his name was called Jesus -- the name that he was called by the messenger before his conception in the womb. And when the days of their cleansing were fulfilled according to Moses' Torah, they brought him into Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (just as it has been written in Yahweh's Torah that "Each male who opens a mother will be called holy to the Lord.") and to give a sacrifice according to what was said in Yahweh's Torah, "A pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons."*

The shepherds had visited the newborn Messiah presumably during the night that he was born, but certainly within a week of his birth. On his eighth day, Jesus was formally named at the time of his circumcision.

That Jesus was circumcised according to the Torah was not the only manner mentioned in which Yosef and Miriam were sure to follow the teachings of the Torah. Lev 12:1-8 describe the time of purification after birth: "Then she will continue for thirty-three days [after the circumcision of the child]...she will not touch any holy object or enter the holy place until the days of her purification have been fulfilled." Therefore, Lukas records that at least one month passed after Jesus' birth.

The presentation to the priests had been initiated at that same time, along with the mother's sin offering. At this time in Yosef's and Miriam's life, they were poor enough that they could not afford a lamb for offering, but the Torah had made provisions for them to sacrifice two birds

(Lev 12:8). The other quotation from the Torah comes from Ex 13, wherein God claims for himself the dedication of all firstborn children (13:1-2, 12) and animals. The firstborn animals were to be sacrificed, but firstborn children were bought back (redeemed), in memory of God's rescue of the firstborn children of the faithful on the night of the original Passover (Ex 13:13-16).

And look, there was a person in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this person was just and devout who was expecting the comforting advice of Israel. And breath was holy upon him. And he had been warned by the holy Spirit that he would not see death until he indeed saw Yahweh's Anointed One. And with the breath he came into the temple court. And when the parents led the child Jesus in, for them to do according to what was customary in the Torah about him, Simeon also took him into his arms and praised God, saying, "Now O Sovereign, release your slave in peace, according to your declaration: because my eyes have noticed your salvation, which you have prepared according to the presence of all the people as a light for the revelation of nations and a glory of your people Israel."

As Yosef and Miriam went to the temple, they met there two priests, one named Simeon and another called Anna (or Hannah). Lukas provides both of their encounters with the baby Jesus, although the second is shortened for literary purposes. In his version of the narrative, Lukas often includes parallel accounts for men and women -- a sign of equality among all of God's people.

Simeon is described as both just and devout -- not only did he follow the traditions of his day, but also he followed God's spiritual teachings taught by the Torah. Knowing that the Torah predicted the coming of the Anointed One, Simeon was expecting the messianic message.

Simeon was also a prophet, for he had "holy breath" and in fact had received a prophecy from God that the Anointed One would come in his lifetime. As Simeon entered the temple court to approach Yosef, Miriam, and the young Jesus, he immediately realized that this was indeed the Messiah and praised God for having allowed him to see Jesus.

Israel's salvation would come in accepting the teachings of the Anointed One, but the phrase "light...to the nations" comes from Isa 42:6, which is part of one of the "servant songs" about the Messiah. Here already, Lukas reveals to his reader that people were aware that the Anointed One was not to be merely a Davidic king but also a suffering servant who would initiate a new covenant to eventually include gentiles.

And his father and mother were wondering about what was being said about him. And Simeon praised them and said to Miriam his mother, "Look, this one is being placed for a fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign of contradiction. Now also, a sword will cut through the soul of you yourself, so that the reasonings of many hearts would be revealed."

Miriam and Yosef were not surprised that Simeon recognized who Jesus was, nor were they astonished that Jesus was who he was -- for they had been told these things in advance. What surprised them then? Simeon's revelation that the Anointed One would be the suffering servant predicted by Isaiah was something that was difficult to understand, since the traditions of the day separated these figures. When called to explain, Simeon noted that because of the limitations imposed on them by their own paradigm, many Jewish people would fall on account of Jesus,

and many would rise up as well. This appears to be an application of the passage in Isaiah (8:14-5) which predicts that on account of the Messiah and his teachings, "many will stumble on it. They will fall and be broken; they will be ensnared and taken."

A sign "of contradiction" may signify that people would set themselves up in opposition to the Messiah, or that the Messiah would be a living contradiction to their preconceived ideas about him, or it may mean both things. This inner strife would affect even Jesus' parents. Yet all of this was happening so that it would be made known who was truly willing and who was not willing to follow God.

V

36 *And there was a prophet Anna, daughter of Fanuel, from the tribe of Asher. She had advanced in many days: having lived with her husband for seven years from her virginity, she was also a widow until age eighty-four. She did not withdraw from the temple courts, night and day performing religious service with fasts and supplications. And at that hour, she was standing by, acknowledging God, and she spoke about him to all those who were expecting Jerusalem's redemption.*

Together with Simeon was another prophet, Anna. It is interesting that she was from the tribe of Asher -- at least in one respect. Asher's family lived in Galilaiah, and Anna was therefore a prophet from Galilaiah. Certain of the Jewish leaders of the time believed that no prophet could arise from that region, and yet here was a well-respected prophet in the temple who was from Galilaiah.

It is possible that Anna's father might have been prominent as well. Nevertheless, Anna's claim to fame was her devoted life to God. As was appropriate, she had been a virgin at the time of her marriage. Even though her husband had only lived for seven years, she remained a widow (i.e., did not remarry) from that time until her present age of eighty-four. Rather than turning to other interests, she had spent numerous years in honest service to God. As a prophet, God spoke to her, and she too was aware that the Anointed One had arrived. Consequently, she began to tell people that the Messiah was here, but notice the wording: "she spoke ... to all those who were expecting...." Not everyone in Israel was open to the Anointed One's message, but those who were ready for it were also willing to listen to Anna. No doubt they were pleased that their "redemption" was near.

And as they finished all the things according to Yahweh's Torah, they returned into Galilaiah into their city, Nazareth. Now the child grew and was strengthened, being filled with wisdom. And God's favor was upon him.

After completing everything that the Torah prescribed for Jesus and his parents, the family returned home to Nazareth, where Jesus is described as growing up both physically and spiritually, and enjoying God's favor. The author has established that two great prophets were about to arise in Israel (John and Jesus); only one narrative now separates the reader from the advent of those great spiritual leaders.

VI

41 *And his parents went every year into Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. And when it happened that he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast, and after completing the days, during their return Jesus the boy remained in Jerusalem, and his parents did not know it. Now thinking him to be in the traveling company, they went a day's way and sought him among the relatives and acquaintances. And when they didn't find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him out.*

The Torah indicated that "three times per year all your males will appear before Yahweh God" (Ex 23:17; 34:23). Young children and women were not obliged to make the trips to the temple for the feasts, but many women went voluntarily, and families often traveled together. It is perhaps significant that the first feast mentioned by Lukas is the Passover, for the Passover celebration essentially climaxes this account. Some commentators suggest that boys were obliged to attend the feasts beginning at age twelve, which is the reason for Lukas' jump to this particular year.

We learn later on (22:1f.) that Lukas uses the term "passover" colloquially to signify the whole Feast of Unleavened Bread. After spending the week in Jerusalem at the feast, the extended family and traveling companions went to return to Nazareth by caravan. Apparently Jesus did not ride with his parents together but perhaps with one or the other, or perhaps with other children, and so they accidentally neglected to ensure that he was part of the caravan that was returning home. After one day's journey, they panicked, realizing that he wasn't anywhere among them, and so they went back to Jerusalem to find him, probably expecting to find no one at all -- or perhaps a frightened child crying for his parents.

And it happened that after three days they found him in the temple court, sitting in the midst of the teachers both hearing them and questioning them. Now all those who heard him were astonished at his intelligence and answers. And when they noticed him, they were amazed. And his mother said to him, "Child, why have you done to us in this way? Look, your father and I were seeking you in sorrow." And he said to them, "Why were you seeking me? Didn't you know that it is necessary for me to be in my Father's place?" And they did not understand the declaration that he had said to them.

Miriam and Yosef probably searched first near the place where they had been staying. Then they began to search places that they had visited, thinking that Jesus might be at one of them. Finally, they located him in the temple courts, where open religious discussion regularly took place. Among the rabbis and their students, Jesus the twelve year old boy was sitting, as though he too were one of their students. Rather than merely listening, though, he was actively participating in the discussion, asking questions and giving intelligent replies to the things that they asked him in return. The rabbis were amazed and probably delighted.

Jesus' parents were not so pleased. It was Miriam who began to chastise her son for having wandered from the caravan and having caused them grief for so many days. But Jesus' reply indicates that he knew already of his greater mission. "Why were you seeking me?" In other words, "Why didn't you know where I was?" He first implied, then stated that he had gone to the

one place where he should have been expected to go. For Jesus had migrated to the temple courts, where scholarly instruction took place.

Since he was speaking to his mother, the phrase "in my Father's place" (or "about my Father's matters") seemed obscure. After all, Yosef had been with Miriam and was returning to his carpentry business in Nazareth.

And he went down with them and came into Nazareth, and he was submitting to them. And his mother kept all the declarations in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and maturity and favor with God and people.

Although no one understood then the things that had happened, Miriam remembered them later on and came to understand more fully what it meant to have the Anointed One as her son. We read very little of Yosef in any of the four accounts after this point, and it is somewhat likely that he was old (or ill) and that he died during the years that Jesus was actively teaching. The prediction, earlier, had called for both of his parents to go through the same process of wondering about Jesus' identity; Lukas emphasizes the woman's response to him, again elevating the role of women.

VII

3:1 *Now in the fifteenth year of the government of Tiberius Caesar, while Pontius Pilatus was governing Judea and Herod was Tetrarch of Galilaiah (now Filippus his brother was Tetrarch of Ituria and of the Trachonite country, and Lusaias was Tetrarch of Abilene), under the high priesthood of Annas and Kaiaphas, a declaration of Yahweh happened upon John the son of Zechariah in the desert. And he went into all the countryside around the Jordan, heralding a baptism of mental change into forgiveness of sins, as it was written in a scroll of the words of the prophet Isaiah:*

Tiberius Caesar had begun his reign on August 19th, in the year 14 CE. After ruling for two years together with his predecessor, Augustus, twelve full years had passed with Tiberius as emperor. Therefore, the author now pinpoints the time of the beginning of John the Baptizer's work as sometime between August 19, 28 and August 18, 29 CE. Tiberius died in the year 37. The account of Jesus' life according to Johannes places Jesus' own advent at perhaps a month or two prior to Passover (in 29 CE), which might make John the Baptizer's advent a few months earlier, perhaps in the fall of 28.

Pontius Pilatus was governor (the later term was "procurator") of Judea from 26 to 36 CE. Herod Antipas was the ruler of one fourth of the kingdom; the term "tetrarch" indicates this. According to Josephus, Herod Antipas continued as ruler of the region until Tiberius' successor, Gaius, removed him from the post. Filippus was Tetrarch at the time, dying during the 20th year of Tiberius' reign. Josephus records also that Lusaias was Tetrarch of Abilene until Claudius gave the region to Agrippa in 42 CE.

Having fixed the time of John's advent (and therefore Jesus') in secular history, the author points now to the Jewish priesthood. Annas (Hannas) was high priest by himself from 6 CE to about 15

CE. After this time, he shared the priesthood. Some say he held this role in somewhat of an emeritus status, but other researchers claim that he remained the high priest while others merely assisted him in the role of deputy. At any rate, Annas' son-in-law, Kaiaphas (Kaifa) was priest together with him from 18 CE until 36 CE. Lukas therefore has pointed to the beginning of the prophetic message of the new covenant far more accurately than a typical historian of the day would have expected, but since his readers may theoretically have come from any background within the Roman Empire, he provided some means for them to understand when these events took place.

Having established the time frame, the author writes in the traditional language about what happened. "A declaration of Yahweh happened...." Thus, John is portrayed as a traditional prophet. With what God told him, John became a herald -- an official representative -- telling people of a covenant of mental change. This is significant and also fits into the traditional role of prophet. In the Hebrew Bible, God often told his prophets to warn the people about a coming judgment but to tell them that the faithful who followed God with the proper attitude would be spared. Here, John tells those who would listen that they too would need to have the right attitude.

"A voice crying out in the desert, 'Make ready Yahweh's way. Make straight his highways. Every valley will be filled up, and every mountain and every hill will be lowered. And the crooked places will be made into straight ones, and the rough places will be made into smooth ways. And all flesh will see God's salvation.'"

The direct citation from Isaiah 40 indicates that John was sent to prepare the way for God to deliver his message (through the coming Messiah). The other language indicates a stark change in the state of affairs. Looking back, we see that salvation came not through following a *religion*, per se, but by adhering to certain spiritual principles. We also know that the judgment on Israel came during what is called the First Revolt, during which the Roman armies under Titus overwhelmed the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, destroying the temple and putting an end to Priestly Judaism.

Therefore he said to the crowds who were coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who has pointed out to you to flee from the coming anger? Therefore, make fruit worthy of the mental change and do not begin to say among yourselves, 'We have Abraham as a father.' For I am telling you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham out of these stones!"

The author has apparently taken this segment from the account of Matthaiah, which is nearly identical. From that account, we know that at first glance Lukas' version appears to be more harsh. However, by comparing what Matthaiah wrote, we see that the people in "the crowds" that John was addressing were Perushim and Zadokites, members of the priestly classes and of the rabbinical scholars.

"The coming anger" is the judgment on Israel that was to happen during the First Revolt. John asks rhetorically who had warned them because he knew that their attitudes did not coincide with what God had in mind.

"We have Abraham..." refers to the claim that their physical lineage as Jewish people would save them, but just as God had judged his people before, so again he would judge Israel. This time, physical lineage would be insignificant, for God had been seeking those who served him spiritually.

There is a play on words here that would have been present in the alleged Aramaic original of Matthaiah's account but which is lost in Greek. The word for "stones" in Aramaic is "abanim," and the word for "sons" is "banim." Thus, John's word play was something memorable for the crowds around him. It was useless claiming to be *banim*, for God could make *banim* out of *abanim*.

"But already the axe is at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not make nice fruit is chopped down and is cast into fire."

The judgment of the religious system had already been decided. The axe was at the root, signifying that the whole system was coming down and would be destroyed, since it had been "fruitless." Those who continued in the system of ritual religion would be destroyed along with it, having no more access to God.

And the crowds asked him, saying, "Then what should we do?" Now he answered, saying to them, "The one who has two tunics should give to the one who has none, and the one who has food should do likewise."

John's message was not merely an ascetic saying -- that people should give away their property. Instead, he pointed to the spiritual principle of being a good neighbor and friend to those around us. The prophet urged his listeners to care enough about those around them that they would give in order to support one another's needs.

This is the center of the teaching that would bring salvation, for the Anointed One was about to internalize the Torah, explaining that its intent was to teach spiritual teachings rather than to control physical behavior. Therefore, John's followers were not only to give but to care, and that loving attitude would remain -- long after ritual religion was gone.

Now tribute takers came to him also to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" Now he said to them, "Collect nothing more than what was arranged for you." And soldiers also asked him, saying, "What also should we do?" And he said to them, "Oppress no one. Neither should you extort. And be content with your wages."

When the Romans overran other nations, they exacted tribute from those countries for Rome. In simple terms, the people paid for the privilege of Roman rule. Since many Jewish people detested the fact that Israel was not an independent nation, their fellow Jews who took tribute money were despised. Even more despised were those who exacted additional funds from the people. The way the system worked, the tribute takers were given a quota to collect; anything beyond that they could keep for themselves. John tells them to collect only what they were directed to collect.

Soldiers were allowed by the government the freedom to impose themselves on the people around them -- at least to some extent. When traveling and for some other purposes, they could quarter themselves (stay) in the houses of local residents, often taking food for themselves. Less scrupulous soldiers may have used their military might to collect what we call today "protection money." John advised these soldiers to be happy with what money they had and to treat others well.

In each of the above examples, John has urged his listeners to pay attention to other people and their own needs, rather than greedily looking out for one's self.

Now all of the people were expecting and reasoning in their hearts about John--whether he was the Anointed One. John answered to everyone, saying, "I indeed am baptizing you with water, but someone stronger than I is coming, of whom I am not enough to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with holy breath and fire."

As the people came to realize that John was a prophet, and as John's fame spread, people began to wonder whether he might be the promised Anointed One. The Baptizer had already announced his role as someone who prepares the way, but here he was even more clear. The Anointed One would appear to have a similar role, but he would be so much greater than John that the prophet considered himself unworthy to remove the Anointed One's shoes for him -- a servant's role.

John had been baptizing the people as a sign that they were entering a reformation movement within Judaism. Under his direction, they were publically setting themselves apart from those who preferred the religion of tradition. By contrast, the Messiah would distinguish his people also with "holy breath." We learn from the Actions that this is a reference to the spiritual gifts predicted by the prophet Joel that would precede the destruction of the temple. The use of "fire" denotes a purification, a cleansing, and during the judgment on Israel, the fire would purify those who followed God from the heart.

"His winnowing fork is in his hand to fully cleanse his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary. But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Therefore indeed, advising them also of many other things, he announced a good message to the people.

However, for other Jewish people, the fires would be fires of judgment -- fires of destruction -- another common metaphor for fire. John's message can be summed up then by saying that the Anointed One was to come soon, teaching about spiritual truths. Those who followed those truths would receive holy breath -- guidance from God, but those who rejected God's teachings would have their religion destroyed and ultimately face destruction themselves. This message was a "good" message to those who earnestly sought to do what was right.

But Herod the Tetrarch -- who had been reproved by John concerning Herodias his brother's wife, and about all the evil things that Herod had done -- added this one to all of them: he also had John shut up in jail.

Wishing for his reader to know what happened to John, Lukas summarizes what was in Matthaiah's account (14:1-12) about the later fate of John the Baptizer. Perhaps two years later,

John publically reproved Herod, telling him that it was against the Torah for Herod to have his sister-in-law. At first, he imprisoned John, as mentioned here. Later, Herodias' daughter caused Herod to have John beheaded. For Lukas, these details were not so important, and perhaps by this time many people already knew the story. He will later mention John's beheading, but only in passing.

Now it happened that during the baptism of all the people, when Jesus had also been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the holy Spirit descended on him in a bodily form like a dove, and a voice from heaven happened: "You are my son, the beloved, in whom I delight."

After informing us of John's eventual fate, more or less, the author returns to the present-day narrative. Although brief, the scene is of central importance, for it marks Jesus' anointing as God's son, the promised Anointed One. Lukas states it rather simply: Jesus identified himself with the reformation movement by receiving John's baptism, but at that time everyone observed a visual manifestation of God himself. The expression "holy Spirit" refers to God in communication with people, and in this instance, God identified Jesus as the Anointed One (God's son), and the people were able to see something physical that resembled an anointing.

As God spoke, he seemed to quote the beginning of Psalm 2:7, which reads, "You are my son; today I have fathered you." The content of the psalm is messianic, composed on the event of a coronation. The Latin tradition of Lukas, along with manuscript D and some patristic citations, depict God as quoting Psa 2:7 exactly. While this shows that early commentators also had the passage in mind, both the earliest and the majority of manuscripts read as shown above.

VIII

23 *And when he, Jesus, was beginning, he was about thirty years old, being (as it was thought) son of Yosef, the son of Eli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Yannai, the daughter of Yosef, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Noggai, the son of Ma-ath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Shemei, the son of Yosech, the son of Yodah, the son of Yohanah, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Sheathiel, the son of Neiri, the daughter of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Kosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Eir, the son of Yeshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Yorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Yosef, the son of Yonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Yeshai, the son of Yobed, the son of Boaz, the son of Shelah, the son of Nahshon, the son of Aminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hesrom, the son of Fares, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaak, the son of Abraham, the son of Therah, the son of Nachor, the son of Seruch, the son of Ragau, the son of Falek, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Ka-inan, the son of Arfaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Mathuselah, the son of Henoch, the son of Yared, the son of Mahalele-El, the son of Ka-inan, the son of Enosh, the son of Sheth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

Having established Jesus as the Anointed One, Lukas clearly identifies his anointing as his "beginning" and then traces his lineage. It was customary then to trace one's lineage back to Abraham through one's tribe, but making a double point that Jesus was "son of God" in three

senses, Lukas identifies the high points of Jesus' genealogy all the way through Adam. Thus, Jesus was "son of God" by virtue of his virgin birth; he was "son of God" as the Anointed One who was to follow God's wishes completely; and he was "son of God" in that his lineage could be traced not only to David, nor to Judah, nor to Abraham, but all the way back to God. Of course, the tracing to God was simply an exercise to make a point, for anyone who could trace his lineage to Abraham was also able to trace himself back to God.

It is necessary to mention two things: first, that in identifying members of a genealogy only the prominent ancestors were normally listed. Therefore, the list appears longer here than it does in Matthaiah, for Lukas appears to have considered more of those ancestors "prominent" than did Matthaiah. Also, Matthaiah intentionally limited his list to include exactly multiples of fourteen ancestors, since "14" was the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew name "David."

The second point is this: that many people in those days had more than one name. Just as Simon was also called Peter and (we will see later) Matthaiah was also called Levi, certain of Jesus' ancestors were known by different names. Thus, Yosef's father is called here Eli rather than Jacob. We also observe that the ancestry diverges, following one child instead of another for Lukas, who follows the line through David's other son, Nathan, rather than through Solomon. He also appears to trace the lineage through women at some point(s), which was most uncommon, but Lukas did make it a priority to elevate women.

IX

4:1 *Now Jesus, full of holy breath, returned from the Jordan and was led in the breath into the desert, where he was tested for forty days by the Accuser. And he did not eat anything during those days, and he was hungry when they were completed. Now the Accuser said to him, "If you are God's son, talk to this stone, so that it would become bread."*

Jesus spent some time out in the desert prior to returning to civilization. After his anointing, he immediately was led by inspiration of God into a secluded area to be tested. This is one of the rare occurrences in the Bible of direct involvement by the Accuser (or Enemy, called "the devil" and "Satan" in most translations). The tests appear to resemble the pattern in the book of Job, wherein the Enemy can only act as God allows him to act.

The first test concerns a basic human instinct: hunger. Appealing also to Jesus' pride, the Accuser questions whether he really is the Anointed One. If he is the Messiah, he should be able to call upon God's power to turn a stone into a loaf of tasty bread.

And Jesus answered to him, "It has been written that 'Humanity will not live on bread alone.'"

Jesus' reply cites the Torah: "...he humbled you and let you hunger, and he fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know -- so that he would make you know that humanity does not live on bread alone, but that humanity lives on everything that comes out of Yahweh's mouth." Matthaiah's account quotes the last portion, but Lukas assumes that the reader is familiar with it. Thus, Jesus establishes the priority that one's spiritual needs ought to have over one's physical needs. The principles of the Torah are the true food.

And after leading him up, he showed him all the kingdoms of the empire in a mark of time. And the Accuser said to him, "I will give you all this authority and their glory, because it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want. Therefore, if you bow down in my presence, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered, saying to him, "It has been written, 'You will bow down to Yahweh your God, and you will do religious service to him alone.'"

As was the case in Job, God had given the Accuser whatever might be necessary to test Jesus. But what the Enemy possessed was purely connected to this physical realm. The Accuser offered Jesus all manner of earthly power and pomp if only he would renounce his messianic mission.

Bowing down to someone was a sign of respect, and ordinarily it signified the acknowledgement of someone else as a superior. Jesus was not about to treat his enemy as a superior in return for earthly kingdoms. His reasoning was easy to comprehend: only God is a worthy superior for the Messiah, for only God deserves the service of human beings. In support, Jesus cites God's words in Deut 6:13, which reads more fully, *"You will fear Yahweh your god. You will do service to him, and you will swear by his name."* This is repeated in Deut 10:20. Each time it is a prohibition about treating anything else as though it were a god. In Deut 11:1, the citation at 10:20 is accompanied by a reminder to love and to keep the principles of God's instruction (Torah).

Jesus quotes the passage loosely, and perhaps "bow down" appears in early copies of the Hebrew Bible in the place of "fear." The two words are not similar in Hebrew, though, and so "bow down" might be Jesus' own analysis of the situation, to which he applied the Torah passage.

Now he led him into Jerusalem and placed him on the wing of the temple, and he said to him, "If you are God's son, cast yourself down from here. For it has been written that 'He will give a precept to his messengers concerning you, to protect you,' and that, 'They will raise you up on hands, lest you should strike your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered, saying to him that, "It is said, 'You will not test out Yahweh your God.'"

Finally, the Accuser of the Faithful takes Jesus to the temple, which the Jewish people regarded as a holy place devoted to God. There, he again questions Jesus' identity, this time daring the Anointed One to call on God to protect him -- after first jumping from the temple to the ground! The Accuser builds a strong case by citing from the Psalms: *"Because you have made Yahweh your refuge -- the Highest One your habitation -- no bad thing will happen to you, no scourge will approach your tent. For he will give a precept to his messengers concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. They will raise you up on hands, lest you should strike your foot against a stone. You will step on the lion and the adder; the young lion and snake you will trample underfoot."* (Psa 91:9-13)

However, it would be inappropriate for even the Messiah to put God to the test in such a fashion, and clearly that was not God's intent as protector of the faithful. Jesus' reply again comes from the Torah (Deut 6:16): *"You will not test out Yahweh your God as you tested him at Massah."*

At Massah (Ex 17:1-7), the people of Israel had tested God, wanting God to prove -- by giving them water -- that he really was with them (v. 7). Yahweh God did provide them water, but he

forbade them from ever asking him to prove he was with them again. The name, "Massah," given to that place means "proof."

And when he completed every testing, the Accuser departed from him for a season.

Jesus refused three times to be tempted to change his loyalties. Knowing God's teachings, Jesus refused to violate them -- even to demonstrate that he was the Anointed One. And so the Accuser left Jesus, having found nothing in which to accuse him. However, the postscript does not say that he left Jesus alone permanently -- only that he stopped testing Jesus temporarily.

X

14 *And Jesus returned into Galilaiah in the power of the breath. And a voice went out about him into the whole surrounding countryside. And he taught in their gatherings, being glorified by all people.*

By this time, Jesus has gathered his initial students (Jn 1:19ff.), and his return to Galilaiah included also his visit to Kana with his mother. All we are told here is that people began to talk about him, because of the things that John was saying about him. In some of the Galilaian cities, then, people began to request his company and to listen to his teachings.

And he came into Nazareth, where he had been raised, and according to his custom he entered into the gathering on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And a scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and after unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, 'Yahweh's breath is on me. On account of this he has anointed me to announce a good message to the poor. He has sent me forth to herald a release to captives and a restoration of sight to blind people, to send forth in freedom those who had been crushed, to herald Yahweh's acceptable year.'"

After speaking in several cities in the area, including Kafar-Nahum, Jesus returned to his hometown. In many Jewish gatherings it was (and is) traditional to allow someone to read and speak briefly from the Hebrew Bible. Following that custom, Jesus asked for the scroll of Isaiah, unrolled it to what we now call chapter 61, and began reading. The section is reminiscent of the servant songs, and the author writes in the first person. The passage (61:1-11) was commonly seen as a prediction by the author of the Anointed One, and what God would say through him. The chapter speaks of an everlasting covenant (v. 8) and of superiority over outsiders (vv. 5-6). The Anointed One describes himself as a bridegroom (v. 10), an image used by John the Baptizer in Johannes' account to describe Jesus.

"The poor" here may signify anyone who has been suffering spiritually; the reading in Isaiah allows for it, and Lukas appears to use "the poor" in place of Matthaiah's "poor in spirit". The heralding of the acceptable year is an announcement of God's favor for those who accept their Messiah.

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the assistant, and he sat down. And the eyes of all people in the gathering were staring at him. Now he began to say to them that, "Today this writing which is in your ears is fulfilled."

In stating that the writing was being fulfilled, Jesus was essentially telling them that he was the Anointed One. Although he did not bluntly state it so, anyone who understood the passage realized that if Jesus was applying it to the current time, then he was applying it to himself.

And all were testifying to him and were wondering at those sayings of favor which were going out from his mouth. And they said, "Isn't this Yosef's son?" And he said to them, "You will surely say this analogy to me, 'Healer, cure yourself.' Do also here in your own country the things that we heard have been done in Kafar-Nahum." But he said, "Indeed I am telling you that no prophet is acceptable in his country. Now in truth I am telling you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, as a great famine happened over all the land. And Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widowed woman, Sarepta of Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel with Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naiman the Syrian."

On account of Jesus' application of the prophecy in Isaiah to himself, the people started thinking about whether or not he might indeed be the Anointed One -- especially given the things he was teaching. However, many of them doubted. After all, they had known him for years. They had seen him grow up, and they were familiar with his family. Naaahh: he couldn't be the Messiah.

In asking him to "cure himself," they were asking him to work whatever wonders and signs he had begun to work in other areas. After all, he ought to be able to do those same things in his own hometown, if he really were the Messiah.

Jesus responded by saying that "no prophet is acceptable" in his homeland. What did he mean? It did not matter whether or not Jesus performed similar miracles; the people would not accept him as Anointed One because they had preconceived ideas about him.

His two analogies were possibly the most scathing verbal attacks that he could have made. "There were many widows in the land" means "there were many Jewish widows." Yet during the time in question, the **only** widow visited by Elijah was a gentile. Elijah had cursed the land, using power from God to prevent it from raining -- due to Ahab's wickedness (1 Kgs 16:32-33; 17:1). At that time, God sent Elijah across the Jordan River (17:5), so he would not suffer that curse. But God himself also sent Elijah to Sidon to meet the widow (17:8-9), and because of her own faith, God blessed her so that her supplies would not run out until rain came (17:14-16). In citing this passage, Jesus implies that sometimes gentiles are more pious than Jewish people. His direct application is that Elijah had found more faith outside "his own country".

The story of Naiman (Naaman) the Syrian is found in 2 Kgs 5:1-14. The King of Israel (whose name is not mentioned there but is probably Yoram) did not wish to hear the Syrian king's plea to ask Elisha to cure his commander, Naiman. And even though Naiman had a lesson of his own to learn about expectations (5:11-14), he was smart enough to listen to his servants and never doubted that Elisha had the power from God to cure him. Thus, when his own king was more

concerned with the political situation with Syria than with someone's health, Naiman the Syrian had enough trust in God's power to go to Elisha to be cured. Again, Elisha had found more faith outside "his own country."

Jesus was NOT building up the gentiles as superior in faith. Instead, his application was that the people of Nazareth were stumbling over their own preconceptions about Jesus, to the point where the people in the cities around them were more accepting of their hometown Messiah than they were.

And when they heard these things, all those in the gathering were filled with emotion. And they rose up and threw him out of the city, and they led him all the way to the mountain face on which their city was constructed, so as to hurtle him down. But he went through their midst and went away.

The Nazarenes appear to have misunderstood his saying -- thinking that Jesus was supporting gentiles over the Jewish nation. It is still possible that they did understand him, however, and were merely enraged at being compared unfavorably to every other city in Galilaiah. Either way, they planned to injure or kill him by throwing him from a cliff. God would not allow this and helped Jesus to escape.

XI

31 *And he went down into the city of Kafar-Nahum of Galilaiah, and he taught them during the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at his teaching because his message was with authority. And there was a person in the gathering who had a spirit of an unclean spirit being, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ah, what is there between us and you, Jesus the Nazarene? Do you come to destroy us? We know who you are: God's holy one." And Jesus censured him, saying, "Muzzle yourself and come out from him." And after tossing him out into the middle, the spirit being came out from him without hurting him. And wonderment happened to all, and they were speaking together with one another, saying, "What a message this is, that with authority and with power he directs the unclean spirits, and they come out!" And a report about him went out into every place in the surrounding country.*

Jesus and his small group of followers returned to Kafar-Nahum, where they had been better received. He stayed there for several weeks, teaching them about the deeper nature of the Torah. In those days, the rabbis were already beginning to cite one another in their applications of the Torah and Prophets. For example, they might explain that Rabbi Hillel taught that the passage meant that they should do such-and-such. In that respect, many of the teachers were not applying the teachings of the Torah directly but were passing on other people's opinions. They became keepers of tradition more than keepers of the Torah. On the other hand, Jesus taught "with authority." This meant that he simply applied the teachings of the Torah and explained their meanings, without the use of an intermediary set of rabbis, rejecting the practice of human opinion as tradition.

Jesus' authority to teach was accompanied by various signs that proved he was indeed the Anointed One. When Jesus encountered someone who had a spirit being inside of him, his authority to teach was demonstrated.

Spirit beings were not all "evil," but this particular spirit being was classified as "unclean," and so Jesus set out to free the man from its influence. Yet before he was able to do so, even the spirit identified Jesus as the Anointed One ("God's holy one"). Therefore, we have here double testimony that Jesus was the Messiah and therefore that his teachings should be followed: not only was he able to overpower the spirit being with the power from God to cast it out but also that spirit itself identified him as the Anointed One. As a consequence, people began to spread the message about his deeds from town to town. Notice, though, that Lukas does not tell us that they were all convinced that he was the Anointed One -- even this miracle did not persuade them all, but at least many of them knew that God was with him.

Now after rising up from the gathering, he went into Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was held by a great fever, and they asked him about her. And standing above her, he censured the fever, and it left her. Now she rose up immediately and served them.

Simon (i.e., Peter) was already traveling with Jesus, although Lukas has not yet mentioned him. Possibly, the author believes that his readers are familiar with Johannes' account of how Peter and Andreas met Jesus while they were in the company of John the Baptizer. Therefore, when the reader comes across the name "Simon," (s)he already knows who is intended.

It is probably at Simon's request that Jesus visited his mother-in-law and miraculously cured her fever.

Now while the sun was setting, all of those who had people who were afflicted with various diseases brought them to him. Now he placed his hands on them one at a time, and he cured them. Now also, spirit beings came out from many people, calling out and saying that, "You are God's son." And censuring them, he did not allow them to say that they knew him to be the Anointed One.

Possibly because they had heard what Jesus had done for Simon's mother-in-law, the people in the area began bringing their sick to him to be cured, and Jesus exercised his power from God to heal them all. The people had also heard about the man with the spirit being in him, and so anyone who had an unclean spirit in them was also brought to Jesus, so that the spirit would be cast out.

As before, these spirits wanted to identify Jesus as the Messiah ("God's son"), but he forbade them from telling everyone. Here we see that it is necessary for each person to come to his own convictions about Jesus. Furthermore, although Jesus was doing what the Anointed One was supposed to do, and although he had applied a messianic passage of the Prophets to himself, he was not publically announcing his identity. It is elsewhere indicated that he didn't want to "tip his hand." If he went around bluntly announcing that he was the Messiah, not only would the leaders of the people have questioned and attacked him sooner, but also there might have been a movement to crown him king -- something that he did not desire.

Now when day happened, he came out and went into a desert place. And the crowds hunted him, and came up to him, and urged him not to go away from them. But he said to them that, "It is necessary for me to also announce the good message of God's kingdom to other cities, because I was sent forth for this."

Notice that even at this point, Lukas is teasing his reader. Although he has quoted Jesus as pointing to "the good message," he has not informed us as to its content. So far, the author's priority has been to establish Jesus as the Anointed One. Then we will read of the message through various forms of teaching.

Jesus left the immediate area and went to the surrounding cities, trying to get the word out not of himself but of the message that he was confidently trying to spread.

XII

44 *And he was at the gatherings of Galilaiah, heralding. Now, while the crowd impressed on him to hear God's message and while he was standing by the lake Gennesaret, it happened that he also noticed two ships stationed by the lakeshore. Now the fishers had left them and were washing the nets. Now after entering into one of the ships (which was Simon's), he asked him to head off from the land a short way. And, after sitting down, he taught the crowds outside of the ship.*

As Jesus went around the Sea of Galilaiah (also called the Lake of Gennesaret), his students made their living. Peter and his brother, and a few of his friends, were fishermen. So, as Jesus was teaching on the shore, he happened to notice his students' ships in the sea ahead of him and decided to teach a lesson from aboard ship. Presumably, he did this because there were so many people that they would have been unable to see and hear him. So, he asked Simon to pilot his ship into a position where he could stand aboard ship, see everyone on the shore, and teach them, with them being able to clearly see and hear him. Again Lukas teases us, not telling us what he taught the people.

5:4 *Now when he stopped speaking, he said to Simon, "Head off into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, saying, "Master, we have labored through the whole night and have received nothing. But at your declaration, I will let down the nets."*

After completing his discussion with the crowd, Jesus initiates a lesson for his students. It is possible that Lukas read Johannes' account of the miraculous catch (Jn 21), and that his research uncovered the fact that another such incident had occurred earlier in their work with him. It may have been important to Lukas that readers of Johannes' account know that this first miracle had occurred -- putting the catch in Johannes into context.

Some commentators make Jesus and Peter out to be strangers at this point, but notice Simon's reaction. First, he unquestioningly allows Jesus to use his ship. Then he listens to Jesus, a rabbi, tell him about his own profession of fishing. Then, referring to Jesus as "master," he follows Jesus' instructions. Knowing that he had already visited Simon's mother-in-law at his request, we observe that the author is not attempting to portray this as the first meeting between Jesus and

Peter. Instead, he has been focusing solely on establishing Jesus' identity, unconcerned with his entourage. But at this point, historically, it is necessary to introduce Peter and his friends.

For Simon's part, he does as instructed, simply because Jesus told him to do it, and not because he really believed that a miracle was about to happen.

And after doing this, they enveloped a great crowd of fishes, but their nets were ripping. And they signified to the partners in the other ship to come and help them. And they came, and they filled both ships, so as to sink them. Now when Simon Peter noticed, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord!" For amazement had contained him (and all those who were with him) at the catch of fish that they had received. Now Jacob and Johannes, sons of Zebediah who were partners of Simon, did similarly also. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on, you will be capturing human beings."

Not only Peter, but also Jacob and Johannes also let down their nets. Andreas is not mentioned by name, but we may assume that he was involved, and probably there were several other fishermen who normally worked with Peter. From the four accounts, we see that Zebediah was a wealthy fisherman who owned several ships. Peter appears to have had a role of captain, directing the other fishers where and when to fish.

There were so many fish that the nets in both ships were about to burst, and their weight was so great that they threatened to sink the two ships. Faced with catastrophe, Peter realized that God could accomplish anything, and that this man Jesus was indeed a powerful prophet. Simon was not yet ready to affirm that Jesus was the Anointed One, but that time would come soon enough. Notice, though, that Lukas does call Simon by the name "Peter." According to Johannes, Peter had been nicknamed "Kefa" (Aramaic for 'rock') early in their relationship -- possibly because of his personality -- but later on a special significance would be attached to that name. Kefa and Peter mean the same thing in Aramaic and in Greek.

"From now on...." Jesus did not take away their means of support as fishermen, but he had taught them a lesson that could be applied to their own lives. Just as an uncertain Peter, Jacob, and Johannes were able to catch a vast number of fish, so also a faithful group of students would be able to bring a great number of people to listen to and to accept Jesus' message.

And after leading the ships to the land, they put away all things and followed him.

Jesus was preparing to go to another city, and so the fishermen sold the fish, docked the ships, and prepared to travel with him.

XIII

12 *And it happened during the time of his being in one of the cities that, look! A man full of leprosy! Now after noticing Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, saying, "O Lord, if you want it, you are able to cleanse me!" And stretching out his hand, he touched him, saying, "I want it. Be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell nobody,*

but "Leave and show yourself to the priests, and make an offering for a witness to them regarding your cleansing, just as Moses arranged."

Between the previous section and this one, an unspecified amount of time passes. In theory that time is somewhat short. Whenever this was, Jesus met up with a man whose body was covered with leprosy. Leprosy (today called, among other things, Hansen's Disease) was horribly feared in Biblical days. Not realizing that leprosy was not as communicable as perceived, people who saw the damage to the skin often feared and ran from lepers.

Under the Torah, lepers were not allowed to participate with other people in any gathering. Instead, anyone who *might* be stricken with the disease was directed to show himself to the priests (Lev 13:2f.). Because of the danger of spreading under certain circumstances, lepers were considered ritually unclean. They were directed to wear torn clothes, to allow their hair to grow and hang loose, and to call out ahead of him that he is unclean, so that no one else might come into contact with the disease (Ex 13:45). Consequently, lepers were not allowed to live in the same city with people who were free of the disease. Even a leper's clothes could be unclean in certain cases.

Wherever this particular leper was -- perhaps outside of one of the cities -- he had heard about Jesus and was convinced that Jesus could heal him. Recognizing the man's trust in God, Jesus healed him, but he directed him not to tell anyone except for the priests who he was and what he had done.

The procedure for being pronounced clean of leprosy is given in Exodus 14. The process took eight days, and so there was time for the word about Jesus to get out.

But rather the message about him got around, and great crowds came together to hear and to be cured from their weaknesses. But he was withdrawing in the deserts and was praying.

Not wishing to be surrounded by the crowds, Jesus left the area and went into the countryside. The solitude and prayer appear to have been something that Jesus practiced somewhat regularly, in order to regain the mental and emotional strength to continue his mission.

And it happened during one of the days that he was teaching, and Perushim and law-teachers were sitting to hear. They had come out of all the villages of Galilaiah and Judea, even Jerusalem. And Yahweh's power was on him to heal.

Sometime later, Jesus was again teaching, but again our author does not reveal the content of that teaching. However, by this time Jesus had attracted enough attention that some of the religious leaders were anxious to see him. The term "perush" signifies (roughly) a stickler for details; the Perushim were known widely for taking into account even the finest points of the Torah and Jewish tradition. It is said that all supposed prophets were put to the test by those who knew the Torah and Prophets the best. If Jesus' fame had spread as far as Jerusalem, then these men were certainly there to deny his claim to being a prophet, just as they also had attempted to deny John's claims.

The wording about healing may mean that God only empowered Jesus to heal under certain circumstances, or it may merely mean that Jesus happened to be healing people at the time.

And, look! Men were carrying on a mat a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and to place him in Jesus' presence. And when they did not find out how they might bring him in through the crowd, after going up on the roof, they let him down through the tiles with the mat into the midst of the crowd in Jesus' presence.

This account will establish that Jesus' teachings are valid because the signs that he is showing demonstrate that God sent him. In this instance, however, we get to read what Jesus' said in response to some criticism of his actions.

The crowds that flocked to Jesus whenever word circulated that he was nearby were so large that people were pressed up against one another hoping to hear him, and, for some of them, to be healed. One man's paralysis prevented him from pushing through the crowd, and his friends were unable to make a path for themselves in between all the people. Yet they so much wanted to see Jesus, and they so deeply believed that Jesus could restore his body, that those who were carrying the paralytic found another way to get to Jesus. That "way" consisted of removing some tiling or thatching from the roof and lowering his mat through the ceiling to Jesus!

And noticing their trust, he said, "Person, your sins are forgiven of you." And the scribes and the Perushim began to reason, saying, "Who is this one who is speaking evil things? Who is able to forgive sins, except God alone?" But, recognizing their reasonings, Jesus answered, saying to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? What is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven of you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But so that you would know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed person, "I'm telling you, rise, and take up your mat, and go into your house."

Jesus knew that the Perushim and scribes were there to examine him, and so Jesus' words were said with the lesson in mind. "Your sins are forgiven," he said. The man had not asked for forgiveness, and perhaps he was a just man, but Jesus forgave him publically. Some people believe that the man's paralysis was connected with sinful behavior, but Lukas never offers us that.

Jesus' words provoked a response that he probably anticipated, for they questioned that he could forgive sins. As the Messiah -- someone who was always in tune with what God wanted -- he would know whether or not God would forgive someone, and therefore Jesus could correctly tell someone whether or not their sins were forgiven. But that's not the point here.

The point is that Jesus was demonstrating himself to those around him. He was establishing his identity, and Lukas' inclusion of the story indicates his intent to show that from the start Jesus was honest about who he was, even proving before the religious leaders that he was the Messiah.

Did he have the authority to forgive sins? If he really was the Anointed One, then he did. As Jesus implied, it is much easier to **tell** someone that their sins are forgiven than to tell someone,

"You're healed." After all, if the healer was a charlatan, the paralyzed man could easily prove to the crowd that he had NOT been healed.

But the fact that Jesus could indeed heal the man would prove to the crowds that he had the authority from God to forgive sins. Therefore, Jesus told the man to get up and go home.

And instantly, he got up in their presence and took up what he had been lying on, and he went into his house, glorifying God. And everyone took amazement, and they glorified God, and they were filled with fear, saying that "Today we have noticed things we didn't expect."

And so, Jesus demonstrated who he was, again without actually claiming to be the Anointed One. People would observe him and would make that determination on their own. The response of the Jewish leaders is not mentioned here, but most likely they felt played. Jesus had turned what was supposed to be a healing into a validation of his identity -- and therefore a validation of his teachings.

XIV

27 *And after these things, he went out and observed a tribute taker named Levi seated at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he abandoned all things and rose up and followed him. And Levi made a great feast for Jesus in his house, and there was a large crowd of tribute takers and others who were reclining with him.*

Some commentators place this segment as the end of Book One. However, because the segment that follows features a healing that serves to introduce Jesus' teachings, and because the second book appears to begin with the identification of the Twelve as his students, this commentary will consider this segment to be the next to last segment in Book One.

The name "Levi" indicates adherence to something, and that is the name used here. In his own account, Matthaiah refers to himself as "Matthaiah," which is one way of saying "Yahweh's gift." The account attributed to Markus also lists his name as "Levi," but points out that his father's name was Alphaeus (Mk 2:14). Like Simon Peter, Matthaiah went by more than one name. One of these (Matthaiah?) was probably the name given at birth, while the other was a name that he took on -- possibly while he associated with Jesus. "Levi" would be an ironic name for a tribute taker, so quite possibly this is the name that he chose (or was given) after he began to follow Jesus.

Levi appears to have known about Jesus, probably hearing of him because of his spreading notoriety. When Jesus asked him to come, Matthaiah dropped everything and immediately followed him. Of course, if Matthaiah himself was the primary source for this material, we might expect his memory to downplay any second thoughts he might have had. Thus, the account makes sense from a historical standpoint.

Matthaiah invited Jesus and his students to dinner, also inviting all of his friends, whom Matthaiah himself says were publically regarded as sinners -- those who did not follow the Torah, or perhaps merely ignored the traditions of the rabbis.

And the Perushim and their scribes grumbled to his students, saying, "Why are you eating and drinking with tribute takers and sinners?" And Jesus answered, saying to them, "The healthy have no need of a healer; rather, those who have a malady. I have not come to call just people but sinners into mental change."

Now we see that tribute takers and "sinners" were not the only ones at the feast, for various members of the religious hierarchy were also there, or rather passing by (which they would have done if the feast occurred outdoors). All three accounts appear to place their questions about the feast as contemporary with the feast itself, so it is more probable that they were passing by than that they questioned him later.

Why eat with sinners? Because they are the ones who recognize that they need someone like Jesus. Here, the interpreters split. Some, with whom this commentator agrees, say that Jesus told the leaders that he was not eating with people who were already following the Torah spiritually because they did not need his assistance. That interpretation follows directly from what he said. However, others believe that Jesus uses the word "just" as a reproof for people who claimed to be pious but were not. In that case, he would be saying that he was not eating with people like the Perushim because they did not welcome him.

The statement, "The healthy have no need of a healer," supports the former interpretation rather than the latter.

Lukas contains two words not found in Matthaiah or Markus. Instead of saying merely that he came to call sinners, Lukas' account adds "into mental change." Jesus was not merely fraternizing with tribute takers; he was calling them for a purpose. In the "healer" metaphor, he was there to heal them, spiritually. He cared about them enough to go to them and help them. The "sinners" of Jesus' association were described in predictions about the Messiah as "lost sheep" (Ezek 34, for example). Thus, Jesus was gathering lost sheep back into the flock when he ate with people like Matthaiah and his friends. By contrast, these Perushim refused even to eat with people like Matthaiah.

Now they said to him, "John's students often fast and make supplications, and the students of the Perushim do likewise. But yours are eating and drinking." Now Jesus said to them, "You are not able to make the sons of the wedding hall fast while the groom is with them. But days will come when the groom will be taken from them. Then, during those days they will fast."

This question seems to have come later, but the passage does not say how much later. If taken in the context of the preceding verses, then it is the Perushim and scribes who were asking this of Jesus. This is not the case, however. "They" must be interpreted in the general sense as "some people," especially in light of both Markus and Matthaiah. Matthaiah is clear (9:14) -- that some of John's own students were among those who wondered about this question, which points to a difference between John and Jesus.

The statement here is one of wondering and not a threat. The people who ask are merely wondering why there are differences between two prophets of what is clearly the same

reformation movement. Why don't Jesus' students fast regularly? More generally, why are there differences?

Jesus responds by telling them that John essentially sums up the old covenant while Jesus represents something new that is coming. His first comment (above) directly answers their question, while their second (below) explains more. The "bridegroom" (i.e., the Anointed One) is present with Jesus' students. By analogy, people do not fast at a wedding feast. In fact, they don't fast until the groom has gone. In Lukas' account, this is Jesus' first foretelling of his upcoming death, which is still some time off. No one picked up on this reference then, and Lukas does not spoil his foreshadowing by mentioning it directly.

Now he also told this analogy to them: "No one puts a patch from a new cloak onto an old cloak. But if they do, it rips the new, and that patch from the new does not agree with the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. But if they do, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the wineskins will be destroyed. On the contrary, one must put new wine into new wineskins. And no one who has drunk the old wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

The importance of this saying cannot be overstated, for it explains for the first time the tremendous scope of Jesus' messianic mission. He was there to change everything -- and not only their system of worship but their way of thinking.

"No one puts a patch from a new cloak onto an old cloak." By analogy, it would be impossible to construct Jesus' way of devotion from Priestly Judaism. Therefore, Jesus' way of thinking will be something entirely new. That John the Baptizer sums up the first covenant and represents a transition into the new one is better handled in Markus, where there appears to be a parallel made between the John/Jesus relationship and the Elijah/Elisha relationship.

Jesus continues to say that it is likewise impossible to put new wine into old wineskins. The two analogies would be familiar to the common people. Of course you can't put new wine into old wineskins! The fermentation of the alcohol in the wine weakens the skins; if they are reused, they are likely to burst. In the same way, Jesus cannot introduce his teachings into the system of Priestly Judaism. It will require a new "system".

But while Jesus was talking about the upcoming fall of Priestly Judaism, he was not introducing the idea of a religion called Christianity. Instead, Jesus was saying that in order to understand and receive the Messiah, the people's whole way of thinking would have to change. The details of this change will come soon, beginning in Part Two.

Most interesting of all is Jesus' final comment, explaining why the old system, with its old way of thinking, had to go: *And no one who has drunk the old wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'* In modern language, Jesus is talking about **paradigms** (pronounced PAIR a dimes). Paradigms -- ways of thinking, or how we view the world through our own experiences and customs -- are difficult to shift. Many people live their whole lives without changing their basic way of looking at life. All around them, the Jewish people of Jesus' time saw the trappings of the religion of Judaism. There was the temple and priestly system. There were the rabbis, who taught the Torah but also explained it with their own interpretations. There was even a sense of Israel's

independence, which at the time was stirring up factions in opposition to their domination by the Roman Empire. There were synagogues (gatherings), which by this time had developed into somewhat formal settings. For everything that could be done, there were the usual ways of doing those things.

So, the old way of thinking about God, about themselves, and about each other, would not work in the new covenant. Why not? Because not only would it reject the new way of thinking and be unable to contain it (like the old wineskins), but also as long as people had both the old and new ways of thinking side by side they would resist change and assume that the more familiar way of thinking was better. People tend to be conservative, to oppose radical changes. Therefore, unless the whole kit and kaboodle were removed, Jesus' new idea would never flourish. As readers, we will soon learn of Jesus' fresh understanding of the Torah.

XV

6:1 *Now during a Sabbath it happened that he went through the wheat fields. And his students also picked off the heads of wheat and rubbed them in their hands and ate. Now some of the Perushim said, "Why are you doing what is not legal on the Sabbath?" And Jesus answered, saying to them, "Haven't you even read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he entered into God's house, and he took the loaves of design, and he ate, and he gave to those who were with him. It was illegal to eat this, except for the priests alone." And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."*

This section, 6:1-11, is transitional. While it contains another sign of healing (see below), it also features teachings from the Lord. From this point on, Lukas will focus more on those teachings and less on Jesus' confirming activities.

By this time, Jesus is certainly in the area around Jerusalem, perhaps along the Mediterranean Sea. Markus appears to place this near the Sea of Galilaiah (3:7), but possibly "the sea" is the Mediterranean, for 3:7-8 appear to state that he had left Galilaiah and was now closer to a place where many Judeans would come to hear him. "The mountain" (Lk 7:12) may refer to the Mount of Olive Trees, of which Jesus seems to have been fond. In chapter eight (8:1) he is travelling around, and then back in Galilaiah (8:26). Chapter nine appears to occur back in the South and takes place after John's death (9:9). Therefore, in the sections that follow, Jesus travels around, spreading his teachings.

At this point in time, Jesus and his students were hungry, so they found wheat by the side of the road -- i.e., *unattended* wheat fields -- and picked wheat from them to eat. Crowds were still following Jesus around, and certain of the Perushim were among those crowds. Since the day was a Sabbath, they questioned what Jesus' students were doing.

It was legal to obtain wheat or fruits from fields or trees that were growing wild, and for food it was even legal to pick fruit or grain and eat it (Dt 23:24-25), but the question from the Perushim concerns their interpretation of what it was legal to do on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath (or seventh) day of the week was recorded as holy according to the Torah:

"Remember the Sabbath day; keep it holy. You will labor for six days, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. You will not do any work during it -- neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your cattle, nor the traveler who is staying within your gates. For Yahweh made heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them in six days, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, making it holy." (Ex 20:8-11)

Deut 5:15 also adds:

"You will remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that Yahweh your god brought you out from there with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. Therefore, Yahweh your god directed you to keep the Sabbath day."

As to what could and could not be done on the Sabbath, the Torah itself is rather silent, and Jesus implies that there is a principle of what it means to "keep the day holy." The rabbis had a great many things to say on this subject. There are 39 acts listed in the Mishnah that were forbidden on the Sabbath, and there are still more recommendations and precautions. The 39 forbidden acts are found at Shabbat 97b. Details are added to activities like "bread making," and there are even minimal amounts of work specified that are to be considered violations of the Sabbath (Shabbat 74a). In extreme cases, one could be stoned to death for deliberately violating the Sabbath.

Jesus and his students were probably not traveling far on this particular day, since the Perushim do not question the distance that they were traveling. However, the students were preparing food -- albeit in a rudimentary way. Although the Torah said nothing about their activities, the Perushim interpreted them as violations of the Sabbath.

Jesus' retort is based on what happened in 1 Sam 21:2-7, wherein David proclaimed that his men had been consecrated to God and therefore could eat of the holy bread. Normally, only the priests could eat this bread (Lev 24:5-9). Jesus' point was that since the men who traveled with David were holy enough to be allowed to eat the loaves of design ("showbread"), then those who traveled with Jesus were holy enough to eat food that had not been set apart for God. The interpretations of the Perushim regarding the Sabbath were so strict that they should have condemned David for his actions, but since David was not to be blamed, then neither should they blame Jesus and his students.

The stronger principle here is the question, "What makes something holy?" Although David and his men were not priests, they were still consecrated to God (in going to fight his war). Therefore, they were not violating the precept against unholy men eating the bread -- even though the statement had been for priests alone. Jesus and his students were also doing God's work. Therefore, they *were* keeping the Sabbath day holy -- by not managing their own daily lives but devoting themselves to God.

And the final statement sums it up: that the Messiah is "Lord of the Sabbath." That is, he is completely devoted to God and therefore can state authoritatively what is the principle of the Sabbath, unlike the Perushim who were only able to endlessly add opinions to the discussion.

Now during another Sabbath, it happened that he entered into the gathering to teach. And there was a person there whose right hand was withered. Now the scribes and the Perushim were scrutinizing him to see if he would cure during the Sabbath, so that they would find a way to accuse him. But he knew their reasonings. Now he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Rise up and stand in the middle." And after getting up, he stood.

Somewhat later, Jesus and the Perushim had another disagreement over the principle behind the Sabbath. Seeing a man with a withered hand, Jesus intended to heal him. But he also knew that he would face accusation from the religious leaders. Therefore, he intended to make a lesson of the matter and asked them questions beforehand:

Now Jesus said to them, "I ask you if it is legal to do good on the Sabbath, or to do bad? To save a life, or to destroy?" And looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." Now he did it and his hand was restored. But they were filled with mindlessness, and they spoke to one another about whatever they might do to Jesus.

The principle here is the same as in the earlier encounter regarding the Sabbath. What makes the day (or anything, or anyone) holy? Doing good deeds on the Sabbath -- and certainly healing -- falls into line with what God had in mind. Take time to remember God. Devote yourself to God. Helping others is devotion to God, in and of itself. Therefore, it is legal to help others at any time.

Naturally, the man was cured, indicating God's own involvement in "activity on the Sabbath."

The Perushim so detested the fact that Jesus was tearing down their traditional interpretation of "Sabbath laws" that they were overcome with their desire to see Jesus defeated or humiliated. Later on, they would seek to kill him.

Part Two

XVI

12 *Now it happened during those days that he went out into the mountain to pray, and he passed the night in God's place of prayer. And when it became day, he called his students to him. And he chose out twelve from them -- whom he also named envoys:*

"The mountain" probably refers to the Mount of Olive Trees. After praying, Jesus sent out twelve of his students. Because of the significance of the Twelve, Lukas identifies all twelve of them by name:

Simon, who is also named Peter; and Andreas his brother; and Jacob; and Johannes; and Filippus; and Bar-Talmai; and Matthaiah; and Thomas; and Jacob the son of Alfeus; and Simon the one called Jealous; and Judah the son of Jacob; and Judah Iscariot, the one who became a traitor.

Notice that here Lukas uses the name "Matthaiah" in preference to the earlier given name of Levi. "Matthaiah" was probably Levi's given name. Our author wants to be as particular as possible, noting not only Peter's other name but identifying the parentage of Jacob and Judah, and mentioning the nickname of the other Simon.

And after coming down with them, he stood on a flat place. And a large crowd of his students and a great crowd of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Ture and Sidon, these ones came to hear him and to be healed from their diseases. And those who were being disturbed by unclean spirits were also cured. And all the crowd was seeking to touch him, because a power went out from him and healed all people.

Jesus was still located at the Mountain of Olive Trees, and so this "Sermon on the Plain" is the same instance as the "Sermon on the Mount" recorded by Matthaiah. However, Matthaiah (who made no claim to adhering to a chronology) assembled sayings from later in Jesus' career and inserted them into the sermon. Lukas has attempted to collect only those sayings which were spoken at that time; therefore, other sayings of Jesus that appear in Mt 5-7 appear later in Lukas' record of the events.

People from all around the area, including from the coast, came to hear Jesus. He was also able to cure their illnesses and to cast out spirit beings from them.

And after lifting his eyes upon his students, he said:

*"Blessed are the poor,
Because God's kingdom is yours.
Blessed are those who are now hungering,
Because you will be well fed.
Blessed are those who are now crying,
Because you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you,
And when they separate you out and censure you and cast out your names as evil on
account of the Son of Man.*

*"Rejoice on that day, and leap for joy, for look! Your reward is great in heaven. For their
ancestors did the same things to the prophets.*

*"However, woe to you who are wealthy,
Because you have fully your comfort.
Woe to you who have now been filled,
Because you will hunger.
Woe to those who are laughing now,
Because you will mourn and cry.
Woe when all the people speak well of you,
For their ancestors did the same thing to the false prophets.*

The "beatitudes" (blessings) from Matthaiah's account are accompanied here by a set of "woes," which are the opposite of blessings. Matthaiah's account appears to be more complete, meaning that Lukas included only those blessings and woes that related to his priority.

The blessings in Matthaiah are separated into two groups of four. The ones omitted from Lukas' version are: "the meek"; "the merciful"; "the pure in heart"; and "the peacemakers". Two of these are trust-related; two are love-related. Two of these are personally-focused, while two are focused on others. That leaves Lukas with two groups of two:

"The poor" refers here, as in Matthaiah, to the "poor in spirit." It is contrasted with those "who are wealthy." The one who recognizes that he needs God -- the spiritually poor person -- will find godliness, but the person who believes he has no need has his own comfort. In other words, that person feels like he needs nothing, and such a feeling seems pleasant, but in reality he has nothing of what he really needs.

"Those who ... are hungering" indicates people who earnestly seek to learn God's truths. Those people will be taught many things and therefore will be filled to satisfaction. However, the person who puts no effort into discovering God's path will eventually learn that he has nothing at all.

"Those who are crying" is equal to Matthaiah's "those who mourn." The other account has, "They will receive comforting advice," which results in the prediction "you will laugh." The one who is crying is crying not for himself but with others. That person will have strong relationships, and in the long run he will laugh. But someone who has no deep relationships may be laughing now (because he does not involve himself in the hardships of others), but in the long run the lack of love in his life will make him deeply mourn.

"When people hate you" refers to people hating someone who puts God's teachings into practice. In particular, someone who follows Jesus' spiritual interpretation of the Torah might wind up being hated by the supporters of ritual religion. However, those who are hated here are loved by God and will receive a great reward. On the other hand, the people who knowingly leave behind a true teaching in order to remain popular are not blessed. God judged false prophets (who were well liked) and will judge such people as well. So, although they might suffer for standing up for Jesus' truth, they'll be in good company: that's how the prophets were treated.

Lukas chose these beatitudes because of their opposites -- because each of them results in a reversal of fortunes: the poor-spirited become rich inheritors, but the rich-spirited become poor; those who cry will laugh, but those who laugh will cry.

The present state of affairs for Jesus' listeners should not be related to what would later be. For Jesus was teaching them that sometimes things are the opposite of what they seem to be.

"But I am telling you who hear:

"Love your enemies; Do well to those who hate you; praise those who curse you; pray about those who slander you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer also the other one. And to the one who holds your cloak, do not withhold your tunic. Give to all who ask of you, and do not

ask it back from the one who holds your things. And just as you want that people do to you, you do likewise to them.

"Love your enemies" seems contradictory as well -- contrary to human nature. Jesus picks it out and will address it in more detail.

"Praise those who curse you" is also a reversal. It reinforces the strong notion of loving one's enemies. "Pray about those who slander you" is likewise.

The other items listed here have the common thread of avoiding vengeance or retaliation. Instead of striking someone back, or cursing him, allow him to hit you again. If someone wants to take your cloak, don't sue him in court: let him take your tunic also. Possessions are meaningless, after all.

Does it matter, then, how others treat us? That shouldn't be any concern. If someone hates, we still should love. If someone is angry, we still should be calm. If someone steals, we still should leave retaliation to God.

Jesus summarizes this with the Golden Rule. While other philosophers had stated a negative version of this rule before ("don't do anything that you wouldn't want done to you"), Jesus turns it around so that it generates positive action: do what you would want done. "Not hating" isn't enough; we must love.

"And if you love those who love you, what generosity is it of yours? For also the sinners love those who love them! For also, if you do good to those who do good to you, what generosity is it of yours? The sinners also do the same thing. And if you lend out to those from whom you hope to take, what generosity is it of yours? Even sinners lend to sinners so that they would receive an equal amount.

These people had been taught to love their friends and hate their enemies, but Jesus said that there's nothing to that. Why...everyone does it. It is the godly thing to care about others, even if those others are against you. It is easy to love someone in return who loves you, but it requires much stronger character to love someone who does not love you.

"However, love your enemies, and do good, and lend, despairing nothing, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest One, because he is gentle to the unthankful and evil.

Regardless of other people's actions, love, give, and do good. This is the greater way, because it is God's own nature. If you do these things, you will be following God's example. In Jesus' metaphor, you are a "son" (or daughter) of whomever you emulate. By emulating God, you display that you are God's sons. And while God can be vengeful, his example is to be quite loving toward those who were against him. The listeners would remember the many times God punished his people but did not destroy them for their unfaithfulness to him. They would realize that there were many nations that God allowed to stand which were not allied with Yahweh.

"Become compassionate, just as your father is also compassionate. And do not judge, and you will by no means be judged. And do not condemn, and you will by no means be condemned. Let go, and you will be let go. Give, and it will be given to you: a nice measure (pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing) will be given into your lap. For it will be measured back to you with the measure you employ."

"Become compassionate" -- this follows from "love your enemies." Rather than being overwhelmed by negative emotion, we should develop positive reactions, because this is how God behaves toward us. Become compassionate rather than judgmental. Let things go (in relationships, this equals "forgive").

Out of the generosity of our hearts, we should give. After all, we need to realize that God will be the one who gives back to us, and he's the most generous of all. Imagine a measure of wheat flour. God returns to us pressed (packed) down and shaken together. In other words, we get the greatest amount possible ... and a heaping (overflowing) amount at that. God isn't interested that we give so that we can receive in return, but he wants us to realize that if we are generous to us, then he will recognize our godliness and reward in return.

But whatever measure we use will be used in return. In those days, measures were often performed using cups, coins, or balances (for weight). It was easy to rig these objects so that the measurements favored you or your company. In other words, you could easily cheat someone by giving them less than you should give. So, God will use the same measure on you that you use on others. Therefore, it only makes sense to be overly generous, since God wants so much to be generous to you.

39 *Now also, he told an analogy to them:*

"Is a blind person able to lead a blind person? Won't both fall into a pit? A student is not over his teacher. But each one who is fully put together will be like his teacher."

How can someone show another person how to live if his own life is in ruin. We can only help others attain what we have already attained. Spiritually, if we excel in generosity, then we will be able to help others be generous as well. That example of godliness will rub off on others.

Therefore, become as loving as possible, so that others will learn from your loving example and become like you. There is responsibility here, because the people who look at your life can only become as loving as they see in you.

"But why are you looking at the splinter in your brother's eye but not perceiving the beam that is in your eye? How are you able to say to your brother, 'Brother, let me. I am taking out the splinter that is in your eye,' while you do not see the beam that is in your eye. Hypocrite! First take out the beam that is in your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye."

Instead of helping one another by showing examples of love, many people try to "help" each other by being critical of them about problems that they have in abundance. It is not love to pick

at one another that way, because your "student" will recognize that you have the same problem as they have to a greater degree, and your example will ruin you.

Therefore, your example is critical. You must have a loving example in order to encourage love. You must be gentle in order to show others gentleness. You must be trustworthy in order to teach that quality. Your attributes and qualities are ultimately what you teach others.

"For there is no nice tree that produces corrupt fruit. Neither is there again a corrupt tree that produces nice fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For they do not gather figs from stickers, nor do they pick grapes from a briar. The good person brings forth goodness out of the good treasure of the heart, and the evil one brings forth evil out of evil. For his mouth is speaking out of the abundance of the heart."

No matter who you are, your example shows more about you than you would ever imagine. Your example tells people what you are really like. "No nice tree produces corrupt (i.e., rotten) fruit." In other words, if you observe rotten behavior, then that person is rotten; if you observe godly behavior, emulate that godliness. Use examples as the primary means of teaching.

It was Aesop who had first said that a tree is known by its fruit. Jesus expands on Aesop, saying that good or evil things come out from a person's heart. Even what a person speaks -- malicious or beneficial -- comes from a person's heart. Therefore, examples are normally an excellent means of discerning what a person is really like, and we should follow good examples.

"Now why do you say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' and you do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to me and hears my sayings and who does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a person who is constructing a house who has dug deeply, and who has laid a foundation on the rock. Now when a flood happened, the stream splashed against that house and was not strong enough to shake it, on account of its being constructed well."

How can someone call Jesus their lord and not act as though he is lord? That's hypocrisy. Unless you follow the principles of love and trust from your heart, Jesus is not lord in your life.

By analogy, the teachings of Jesus are like a well-built house that cannot fall. By adhering to his teachings -- by striving to have relationships that are more loving and more trusting -- you will surely become the best person you can become.

"But the one who hears and who does not do likewise is like a person who has constructed a house on the ground, without a foundation. The stream splashed against it, and it caved in immediately, and it happened that the ruin of that house was great!"

On the other hand, now that you listeners have heard these things, if you ignore them, it will be ruinous for you. When things go bad in your life, you will understand why. You will realize that you could have been loving and should have been loving. This knowledge will only add to your misery. And so it only makes sense to be a loving person.

7:1 *When he had fulfilled all of his declarations in the ears of the people, he entered into Kafar-Nahum. Now a certain Centurion's slave, who was valuable to him, was sick and was about to die. But when he heard about Jesus, he sent forth old people of the Jews to him, asking that he would come and save his slave. Now when they happened by Jesus, they begged him earnestly, saying that, "The one for whom you would be furthering this is worthy. For he loves our nation, and he constructed our synagogue."*

Johannes reports that Jesus left Judea and went back into Galilaiah because the religious leaders were plotting against him. Apparently this continued for some time (see Jn 7:1). Therefore, Jesus returned northward to Kafar-Nahum.

A Roman centurion would normally have nothing to do with itinerant Jewish rabbis. However, since his valued slave was dying, he used his clout to gather some of the respected older people to him. At his request, they went to where Jesus was and asked him for assistance. Their line of reasoning illustrates the notion that it was well known that Jesus was a Jewish Messiah without any particular affinity for the Roman military.

This man had helped build a synagogue, and "he loves our nation" may indicate that he favored Israeli independence. A stand like that would certainly garner support from the Jewish leaders. On the other hand, he may have enjoyed the culture of Galilaiah; perhaps something in the middle is to be preferred.

Now Jesus went with them. But already, since he was not a big distance from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Sir, do not be troubled. For I am not strong enough that you should enter under my roof. So, neither did I consider myself worthy enough to come to you. But say the word, and my servant boy will be healed. For I too am a person who is placed under authority, having soldiers under myself. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

On the way back to the centurion's residence, Jesus met the man's friends, who delivered a message that he considered himself unworthy to have the Anointed One visit his home, or even that the two should meet face to face.

He understood that the Anointed One had the authority from God to heal his servant, just as he himself had the authority to direct one hundred soldiers and to command his slaves. Consequently, he was confident that Jesus needed only to say so, and the slave would be healed. The centurion had Roman authority, but Jesus had God's authority.

Now when Jesus heard the things, he admired him. And, turning, he said to the crowd that was following him, "I am telling you: Not in Israel have I found such great trust." And the ones who had been sent returned into the house and found the slave to be well.

This sequence and the following one appear out of place in Part Two. However, they carry with them the message that Jesus had been given authority from God. Testimony about this will follow.

Meanwhile, Jesus notes here that he had not seen such trust in the power of God anywhere in his travels, and of course, the man's trust was strong enough that God was willing to heal the slave. The passage affirms that gentiles too might have trust in Yahweh God, although Jesus exercised his power only rarely among gentiles.

XVIII

11 *And it happened during the next day that he went into a city called Nain, and his students and a great crowd went together with him. Now he was nearing the city door, and look, a dead body was being carried out, his mother's unique son, and she was a widow. And a considerable crowd of the city was with her.*

Nain is located in the southern part of Galilaiah, away from the Sea of Galilaiah, near the border of the region with Samaria. As Jesus approached the city, he and the throng around him noticed that they were taking a body out to be buried. The term "unique son" does not have to signify her only son (but merely one with whom she had a special relationship), but in this case -- with the mention of her also being a widow -- the author's intent seems to have been to point out that with the loss of her son she was all alone.

And when the Lord noticed her, he had compassion on her, and he said to her, "Don't cry." And he came to her and touched the funeral casket. Now the bearers stood still, and he said, "Young man, I am telling you, get up." And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him to his mother.

Jesus' actions were not taken with any lesson in mind, but the people were about to receive one. As he saw the woman crying over the loss of her son and observed how well respected she was in the community, he comforted her. Then while the pallbearers were still carrying the casket, Jesus asked the man to get out of it. As the man sat up, Jesus helped him climb out of the casket and handed him over to his mother. There was no ceremony attached to Jesus' actions, nor was there any lesson for the mother or crowd. It was an act of compassion on Jesus' part.

Now fear took all people, and they glorified God, saying that, "A great prophet has arisen among us," and that, "God has visited his people."

Rightly, the people did not attribute Jesus' actions to him alone, but they acknowledge that God's power had been active in him, and so they praised God. They did not realize that Jesus was the Anointed One, but they did know that he was "a great prophet." Knowing that God's power had been active among them, the people rightly realized that God had visited his people in performing the act of healing and mercy. The spread of the fear of God and the recognition that God was active through his prophets are common in the Hebrew Bible. The people recognized that Jesus was a prophet like the prophets of old.

And this message went out among the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country about him. And John's students related to him about these things. And calling a certain two of his students to him, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we expect

another?" Now when the men happened by him, they said, "John the Baptizer sent us out to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is coming, or should we expect another?'"

Since Nain was on the southern edge of Galilaiah, word was able to spread easily from those parts toward the south about Jesus. John the Baptizer was still living at this time, and when he heard the news, he sent his students to ask Jesus whether he was indeed the Anointed One. John himself was in prison, and so he had to use his students as intermediaries.

These questions from John's people come right after two healings, including one in which someone was raised from the dead, and John himself was probably recalling the prophecy to which Jesus was about to refer.

John was aware that the Anointed One was active, for they had met at Jesus' baptism. However, being in prison and having not heard Jesus' teachings, John was able to notice only what was public. For example, he would have known that the Jewish leaders were rejecting him -- questioning whether or not he was a prophet. He would have known that Jesus had not made any public claims to being the Messiah. Therefore, John asked him plainly if he was the Anointed One or not?

In that hour, he cured many from diseases, and plagues, and evil spirits, and he freely gave many blind people the ability to see. And he answered, saying to them, "God and relate to John what you have noticed and heard:

""Blind ones are receiving sight," lame ones are walking around, lepers are being cleansed and "deaf ones are hearing, dead people are being raised up," the poor are being told a good message. And whoever does not stumble over me is blessed."

The reference made by Jesus is from Isaiah's writings. *"In those days, the deaf will hear the scroll's message, and out of their gloom and darkness the blind will see. The meek will receive new joy in Yahweh, and the poor among the people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. (Isa 29:18-19)*

We also read:

"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame man leap up like a deer and the mute man's tongue sing for joy. (Isa 35:5-6)

This also fulfills Jesus' prediction (as he read it in the gathering) that he would proclaim a season of acceptance for Yahweh.

Consequently, while Jesus did not say to tell John, "Yes, I'm the Anointed One," he pointed to passages that were to be applied to the Messiah, so that John would trust God and realize that the Anointed One had indeed come.

Now when John's messengers went away, Jesus began to tell the crowds about John: "What did you come out into the desert to observe? A reed being shaken by the wind? But what did you come out to notice? A person dressed in soft clothing? Look, the ones in luxurious clothing and who exist in luxury are in the palaces.

Jesus' comments about John to his own followers establish who John was in God's plan. Was John a "reed being shaken by the wind"? This can mean he was frail in appearance, or it can mean he was a man without genuine conviction. Jesus means it both ways. John may have appeared frail, but he held deep convictions.

Was he a person dressed in soft clothing? Was he wealthy? Physically, he was not wealthy at all. The leaders among the crowd had gone out to see a poor man without convictions -- someone they could push around. But John had turned out to be wealthy in less obvious ways. Yet these people knew that John would not be socially acceptable before they went to see him, because they knew that the wealthy people live in "palaces" -- in large homes -- and not out in the desert.

"But what did you come out to see? A prophet? Yes, I am telling you, and a more abundant one than a prophet. He is the one about whom it was written, 'Look, I am sending forth my messenger before your face, the one who will pave your way in your presence.' I am telling you, no one among those born of women is greater than John. But the one who is smallest in God's kingdom is greater than he is."

Did they think they were going to see a prophet? That was what some people had begun claiming about John, and so yes, people were going to see a prophet. There had been many prophets, but John's role was special. He summarized the Mosaic covenant and made way for the Messianic one.

The passage cited comes from Mal 3:1, wherein God says that he will send his messenger, a figure like Elijah (Mal 4:5f.), to herald the coming judgment and Messianic Era. Therefore, John's own presence and identity also established Jesus to be the Anointed One -- for those who were genuinely seeking for him.

Jesus refers to John as the greatest of all people -- an exaggeration for the greatest of the first covenant prophets. But the "smallest in God's kingdom is greater than he." Why? Whoever embraces the spiritual truths as taught by the Messiah has more than anyone who had been a part of the physical religion that had reigned among God's people prior to Jesus' arrival. Jesus also sets on its end the popular notion of "greatness". Greatness is not achieved by doing the mighty deeds of the mightiest of prophets. Greatness is arrived at by following God's spiritual principles. It cannot be earned by any sort of performance; rather, it is simply a characteristic of anyone who lives spiritually.

"And when all the people heard, even the tribute takers declared God just, having been baptized with John's baptism. But the Perushim and the lawyers set aside God's plan for them, not having been baptized by him."

Everyone in the crowds who had received John's baptism had become part of his reformation movement. That is, they were expecting a coming end to the old way of thinking. They anticipated that the Messiah would teach dependence not on physical lineage or ritual but on personal relationships and spiritual principles. To these people, Jesus' statements made perfect sense, but to the Jewish leaders (who had refused to accept God's principles) Jesus' statements

were a point of contention. Therefore, the leaders put God's plan aside, refusing to become part of it.

"Therefore, to what will I liken the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like those servant boys who sit in the marketplace and who sound off to one another and say, 'We played the pipes for you, and you did not dance. We lamented, and you did not cry.'

"This generation" refers to the people of his time who rejected Jesus, including especially the majority of Jewish leaders. His generation was going to be judged. Why? Because they were like "boys who sit in the marketplace."

Rather than portraying them as great leaders of their people, expounding the Torah and performing God's will, Jesus identifies his generation as little servant boys who play for the crowds. That is, they were not performing a sacred duty; instead, they were trying to win the people's favor. In the name of popularity (among other things), they sacrificed any honor or esteem that they might have gained.

Instead of happily inviting the Anointed One in, they rejected him. They were so concerned with the fact that the people were turning away from **them** that they failed to consider that the reason for people leaving them was that they had been wrong. They had played to the crowds and were now whining because the crowds had found someone else to follow around. They didn't throng around the leaders, yet the common people were hanging on the words of John and Jesus.

"For John the Baptizer came without eating bread and without drinking wine, and you say he has a spirit being. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at the gluttonous person and the drunk, a friend to tribute takers and sinners,' and 'wisdom is justified by all her children.'"

Because they had only been concerned with themselves -- with the idea of occupying positions over their fellow Jews -- they had criticized both John and Jesus. They criticized John because he lived like a Nazirite (and not like everyone else). But when the Messiah came, he lived among them like everyone else -- eating meat and drinking wine. So they accused him of doing those things to excess. Simply put, they were going to find fault with the two prophets no matter what they did, because the leaders' intent was to continue to establish themselves as positional leaders and their way of thinking as supreme. They were not interested in the truth, but "wisdom is justified by all her children." That is, the "children of wisdom" (the people who dumped the Perushim and ritual religion for Jesus' spiritual way) prove themselves in their deeds to have chosen the wise way. [This saying also comes down to us as, "Wisdom is justified by her deeds," which means the same thing.] The lifestyles of the people who follow Jesus' teachings are much better than they had been when those people followed ritual religion.

XIX

36 *Now a certain one of the Perushim asked Jesus that he might eat with him. And he entered into the Perush's house and reclined. And look, a woman who was a sinner in the city, knowing that he was reclining in the Perush's house, brought an alabaster box of balsam. And, standing*

behind him, crying at his feet, she began to wet his feet with tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and she lovingly kissed his feet, and she was anointing them with the balsam. Now when the Perush who had called him noticed, he spoke to himself, saying, "If this one were a prophet, he would recognize who and what sort of woman it is who is touching him, because she is a sinner."

A strand of tradition identifies this woman with Miriam of Magdala; however, this is almost certainly not the case. When Miriam's past is described, she is "the one out of whom seven spirit beings were cast," and she is never described anywhere as having been sinful, or (as some say) a prostitute.

Although it bears vague similarities to an account in Matthaiah (& Markus) and to another in John, this version is unique to Lukas. Although the host here and in Matthaiah are named Simon, this particular Simon was a Perush; the other was a leper. Furthermore, the purpose of someone's interruption in the other account was to point out the waste of money; here it is to identify the woman as sinful. In the other account, it is ultimately Judah Iscariot (perhaps, more properly, Ish-Kerioth) who points out the waste of money in the other account; in this pericope it is the Perushim. Furthermore, the stories go in different directions and end with different "morals." These are entirely different accounts.

A woman described as "a sinner" -- which need only mean that she had left mainstream Judaism -- approached Jesus and anointed him with expensive balsam. Due to traveling, the feet were normally the dirtiest part of the body. As the author later specifies, custom called for the host to provide a servant to wash Jesus' feet just prior to this event; if he had no servants, he should have provided water. Yet even if Jesus' feet had been relatively clean, the fact that the woman wiped them with her hair was a deeply humiliating act. This was a woman who was experiencing an overwhelming heartfelt gratitude toward Jesus because of the forgiveness intrinsic in his teachings. Simon the Perush may have called Jesus to eat with him so as to improve his popularity with the people, for he clearly did not understand the significance of the woman's outpouring of love.

And Jesus answered, saying to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." Now he said, "Teacher, say it."

As Jesus prepared to admonish the Perush, he asked whether or not the man was willing to receive instruction.

"There were two debtors to a certain creditor. One owed five hundred denarii, but the other owed fifty. Since they did not have enough to give back, he forgave both. Which of them, then, will love him more?" Simon answered, saying, "I assume that it was the one whom he forgave more."

Five hundred denarii was not a large sum for a wealthy man as Simon may have been, but for the common laborer it was more than a year's wages. Fifty denarii, then, was no pittance, but it was not a vast sum, either. Both amounts were debts that someone might reasonably default in paying.

Jesus' question is rhetorical. He does not presume that someone would "love" a creditor in any genuine sense, but he uses the word "love" to make his point. Who would feel more positively? The person who had been forgiven of the greater debt. Jesus was trying to point out that the woman's reaction to having him in her life was therefore something reasonable and within expectations.

Now he said to him, "You have judged rightly." And he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman. When I entered into your house, you did not give me water for my feet. But she wet my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss, but since she entered, she has not stopped lovingly kissing my feet. You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with balsam."

This is where Jesus refers to the hygienic custom of washing one's feet after having walked through the dusty streets. Simon had not even provided Jesus with a bowl of water, and so, his feet were filthy. But the woman had provided water from her own tears. Truly, she respected Jesus more than he did.

It was also a custom to greet one's houseguests with a kiss, which honored the guest. Simon had not done that either, but the woman had been kissing his feet -- a sign of greater humility.

Another custom -- this time more a matter of courtesy -- was to provide one's guests with oil for the face/head. The dry desert air and heat causes skin to crack easily. A blob of cool oil for the face felt wonderfully refreshing. Simon had not thought to provide any such oil, but the woman had brought her own -- more expensive -- balsam to anoint him with.

"For this sake I am telling you: her many sins have been forgiven because she loved much. But the one who is being forgiven little loves little." Now he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who were reclining with Simon began to say among themselves, "Who is this who is even forgiving sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your trust has saved you. Go into peace."

Whatever she had done in being considered a "sinner," her trust in God and love for his Anointed One were obvious to Jesus. How simply he said, "Your sins are forgiven," probably looking down lovingly into her crying eyes. What a difference he made in her life!

But Simon had not called Jesus there in order to be forgiven. In fact, he had shown very little love -- if any at all. Simon's Perushim friends were amazed that Jesus was forgiving sins, and this time, we have no record of his having defended his actions. He merely told the woman that it was her own trust (and not his whims or her deeds) that had saved her. If she was the sort to worry constantly about her problems and the interference that they had made for her in her walk with God, "Go into peace," was a beautiful thing to say, for she had probably felt no peace for a long time. Once again, Lukas' inclusion of this account involving a woman elevates the social position of women, for even this "sinful" woman deserved more praise than the Jewish leaders, or even Jesus' dinner host.

8:1 *And during the succeeding days, it happened that he traveled by city and village heralding and announcing the good message of God's kingdom, and the Twelve were with him. And certain women who had been cured from evil spirits and weaknesses were there: that Miriam who is called Magdalene (from whom seven spirit beings came out); and Joanna, Chuza's wife, Herod's steward; and Susanna; and many others, who served them from their possessions.*

The analogy of the Sower, which follows, is considered the "master analogy," for it contains the rationale behind Jesus' teaching by analogy, as well as explaining how Jesus' spiritual teachings would impact people. Therefore, Lukas points out certain of the people who were traveling with him, for these people had witnessed and understood the teachings that Lukas is about to record.

Here, Miriam of Magdala is described as a woman "from whom seven spirit beings came out". We mentioned earlier that no connection is made between this woman and the woman of the earlier encounter. Joanna and Suzanna are mentioned among the others who were present, in the same breath as the Twelve. From Lukas' standpoint, it was just as important to mention Jesus' prominent female followers as it was to mention the male ones. By Jewish custom, though, they were not legal witnesses to anything. Lukas points out that there were "many others" who sold their possessions and/or brought food to sustain the traveling group.

Now since a great crowd was being with him, and since they were coming to him by city, he spoke by analogy:

Jesus saw an opportunity to teach as they were traveling, and he took it.

"The sower went out to sow his seed. And in sowing it, some indeed fell by the road, and it was stepped on, and the birds of the sky devoured it. And another part fell on rock, and on account of its not having moisture it withered after springing up. And another part fell in the middle of stickers: and since the stickers sprung up together with it, they choked it. And another part fell into the good land, and after springing up, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he said, "The one who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The crowds were not told the interpretation (which follows). Here, then, is what they noticed:

Being largely agrarian people, they would realize that what Jesus was telling them about planting seed was true. Sometimes, seed is scattered into various places, but unless it falls upon good soil (where it is cared for properly), the seed will amount to nothing. Therefore, the sower must be careful where he scatters his seed.

"The one who has ears to hear, let him hear," means that the saying must be studied in order to be fully comprehended. Who is the sower? What is the seed? What are the bad places where the seed might fall? What is the good ground? If someone were tagging along, not really trying to understand who Jesus was or what he was teaching, they wouldn't realize what he was getting at.

9 *Now his students questioned him: "What might this analogy be?" Now he said, "It has been given to you to know the secrets of God's kingdom, but to the rest it is told in analogies, so that: 'seeing, they would not see; and hearing, they would not understand.' Now the analogy is this:*

For Jesus' students, who were honestly seeking the truth, "it has been given" to know the details of God's message. Whenever someone introduces a new idea, there are always those who don't want to hear it. Those people have their minds made up already. The message is not going to help them. Jesus' students, chosen because of their dedication to the Messianic reformation, were to be told the meaning of Jesus' analogies. As for the rest of the people, if they wanted to understand, they could understand, but they wouldn't be spoonfed; they would have to become diligent.

The quote comes from Isaiah:

"And I heard the Lord's voice, saying, 'Whom will I send, and who will go for us?'"

"Then I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'"

"And he said, 'Go and tell this people, 'Hear and hear, but do not understand. Look and look, but do not perceive.'"

"'Make the hearts of this people stupid and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'"

"Then I said, 'For how long, Lord?'"

"And he said, 'Until cities lie waste without residents, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate, and Yahweh removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the middle of the land.'" (6:8-12)

When Isaiah first encountered God and was chosen to become his spokesperson (prophet), he first received visions and then was sent to speak to the people. His visions had concerned "the day of Yahweh" (2:12, etc.), when God was about to cause a foreign nation to demolish the temple, preparing to judge his people (3:13-15). In the midst of this, Isaiah was sent to speak to the people, telling them things they would regard as impossible to comprehend. Those people who were not willing to follow God would shut their eyes and ears at Isaiah's message and stupidly refuse to understand. God tells the prophet that these people were not intended to understand.

Jesus saw himself in a similar situation, socially, and applied the context to the present day. Jesus spoke in analogies because the people who truly were sinful (those who rejected his Anointed One) were not intended to understand. Instead, only those who sought God would realize what Jesus was trying to explain to them. Everyone else would have "stupid" (or "fat") hearts.

"The seed is God's message. Now those which are by the road are those who hear. Then the Accuser comes and removes the message from their hearts, so that they would not trust and be saved."

God's message is the spiritualization of the Torah into the principles of Love and Trust, and Jesus has described it as a seed. Whoever spreads this message is like a sower, trying to spread the seed.

If seeds are tossed into the road, they will not grow. Jesus likens this to people who hear the message but who are caused to forget it. "The Accuser" may refer to an active role on the Enemy's part, or it may symbolically mean that the people will listen to the Jewish leaders rather

than following what Jesus tells them. At any rate, they receive no deep understanding of the message and so would not be saved from the coming end of the age.

"Now those which are on the rock are those who receive the message with joy when they hear. And these do not have any root. They will trust for a season and will fall away in a season of trial."

These people develop no convictions. The idea of living spiritually appeals to them, but they don't put any effort into it, nor into understanding what it really entails. Therefore, the message begins to grow within them but then dies. People need to put the message into practice!

"Now that which has fallen into the thorns are those who have heard and who go on and are choked by anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they do not come to complete fruition."

These people have wrong priorities. Unless someone puts God first, (s)he is not able to grow in trust and love. Anyone who remains superficial, allowing problems and worries to overwhelm them or putting other matters first, will not mature.

"But that which is in the nice land are those who hold on to the message in a nice and good heart after hearing, and they bear fruit in endurance."

Finally, these are the people who diligently seek to put God's principles into practice. They develop convictions and live by those convictions. They hold God as their top priority and put other people ahead of themselves. Consequently, they live by love and by trust, and their lives show it.

"Now no one who has lit a lamp covers it with a bowl or puts it underneath a couch. But he puts it on a lamp stand, so that those who go in may see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not become apparent nor anything concealed which will not be made known and come into obviousness."

The spiritual principles of trust and love, active in their lives, were like a lamp. It wouldn't make sense to cover it up, and so they traveled around, allowing others to meet them, and to become part of their lives. In particular Jesus himself was allowing others to see his light.

In another statement of reversal of fortune (of which both Jesus and Lukas appear fond), Jesus said that whatever is hidden will become obvious. He means this not only of the depth of his teachings, but also it signifies the character of a person's heart. Whether good or bad, when confronted with the choice to live spiritually for God (or not), someone's true motives will become apparent, and of course, God knows them already.

"Therefore, look at how you hear. For it will be given to the one who has, and the one who doesn't have: even what he is thought to have will be removed from him."

"Look at how you hear." It is important to receive the message like "good ground." It is essential to open up and to start loving. Love generates love, and so, if someone "has," then he will have

more. But if someone refuses to love -- refuses to spiritualize -- then when his motives are revealed it will become clear even to him that he has no love at all. He and others may **think** that he's a good and loving person, but if it doesn't come from the heart, then people will be able to observe (by his not following the Messiah and his principles) that he doesn't really have love at all.

The way Jesus states this notion is rather like a zen koan: The one who has will have more, but the one who has nothing will lose everything.

Now his mother and brothers happened by him, and they were unable to share space with him, on account of the crowd. But it was announced to him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." But he answered, saying to them, "These are my mother and my brothers: those who hear God's message and do it."

As the crowds gathered closely around Jesus, his own family was unable to approach him. Some commentators claim that "brothers" is used here in a general sense, meaning perhaps other family members. While it is true that Jewish people sometimes used "brothers" and "sisters" in a sense that was more broad, the context here and the naming of his brothers and sisters in Mt 13:55 would tend to indicate that these were Yosef's and Miriam's younger children -- Jesus brothers by birth.

And so, Jesus was expected to have the crowds make way for his mother and his brothers. Instead, his answer underscored the things that he had just been saying. Whoever follows "God's message" (the spiritual Torah), that person is a true relative of Jesus. Elsewhere, especially in Johannes, Jesus speaks of "sonship." Rather than physical lineage, Jesus regards a person as someone's son or daughter if they take after that person. Thus, someone is Abraham's son if they follow Abraham. As the Anointed One, Jesus himself was "God's son," and in one sense this means that he always followed God's teachings. The extension of that principle to people other than himself is found here. Who are Jesus' relatives? Everyone else who follows God's spiritual teachings. Therefore, all Messianic Jews -- Christians -- are to be viewed as a family. They are not an extension of the physical family but, in this application, a spiritual family substitutes for and supersedes a physical family.

XXI

22 *Now during one of those days, it happened that he and his students went into a boat. And he said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." And they set sail. Now he went to sleep as they were sailing, and a gust of wind came down to the lake, and the boat was filling up with water, and they were in danger.*

Some time has now passed, and Lukas does not tell us how much. During this passage of time -- however long it was -- Jesus taught the message to many people in the countryside. The author has selected certain miracles that demonstrate that Jesus had authority from God, preparing to tell how Jesus gave power to the Twelve to do similar things.

At this time, Jesus was back around the region of the Sea of Galilaiah ("the lake") and suggested that he and his students sail to the other side. Presumably then, Peter, Johannes, and the other fishers had their ships with them at the time.

With Jesus asleep, his students did not call upon him to take action when the storm first arose. Instead, they more naturally tried to pilot the ship to safety themselves. But when they noticed that the ship was about to sink, they took action:

Now they went to him and woke him, saying, "Master, master! We're being destroyed!" But he got up and censured the wind and the wave of the water, and they stopped, and a calm happened. Now he said to them, "Where is your trust?" But since they were afraid, they wondered, saying to one another, "So who is he, that he directs even the winds and the waters, and they listen to him?!"

Who is he? He's God's chosen one. For the Anointed One, calling upon the power God had given to him in order to save his friends' lives was a matter of simplicity. Therefore, Jesus assumes that his students should have gone to him calmly, knowing that he had the power to save them. Instead, they had been panicked, and so their reaction -- wonderment about him -- was expected.

And they sailed into the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite on the Sea of Galilaiah. Now going out on the land to him, a certain man from the city met him. He had spirit beings and for a considerable time he had not been wearing a cloak. Nor had he been staying in a house, but in the tombs. Now when he noticed Jesus, he cried out and prostrated to him, and said with a loud voice, "What is there between me and you, Jesus, son of the Highest God? I beg you, do not torture me!" For Jesus had charged the unclean spirit to come out from the person. For it had gripped him many times, and he was bound with chains and shackles and was guarded. And when he broke the bonds, he was driven by the spirit being into the deserts.

The reading "Gerasenes" is held by p⁷⁵, B, D, and much of the Latin tradition, as well as a few more Greek manuscripts. Now Codex Sinaiticus, L, Θ, and a number of other Greek manuscripts read "Gergasenes." Codex Alexandrinus (A), R, W, another family of miniscule manuscripts, and the Majority Text read "Gadarenes," in agreement with the spelling in Matthaiah. The earliest reading has been adopted here, as well as in most translations.

The confusion seems to have arisen over the fact that Gadara, a city of the Decapolis, was the most prominent city in the region (although Hippos was also nearby). Thus, Matthaiah is correct in reporting the area as the "country of the Gadarenes," and yet not saying that the event took place in Gadara. Khersa (or Kersa) is the modern name of the town that once was Gersa, the town of the Gerasenes, which is in the Gadarene region. Just south of Khersa -- on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilaiah -- are places where the slope down to the lake is steep. One of these areas is most probably the place where this encounter took place.

Here, in a land dominated by gentiles but lived in by Jews as well, Jesus meets the Gerasene man. "He had not been wearing a cloak" -- that is, he was not wearing any outer clothing. Possibly, he still wore a tunic and sandals, but more likely he wore undergarments only. The Bible describes indwelling by one spirit being as not particularly harmful, although "influence"

rather than "possession" appears to be more common. This man was possessed by so many spirit beings that he was virtually unable to control himself. His rages and fits were so severe that the nearby people had bound him in chains. After breaking free, the spirits drove him into the desert.

The man lived in the graveyard, probably hoping to die soon. Lukas leaves it to our imagination how it was that the man survived. Maybe he caught and ate fish, or maybe he killed and ate animals, or maybe people brought him food. There is still the disgusting possibility that he fed on corpses. When Jesus saw the man rushing toward him, he recognized the situation and called the spirit beings to exit the man.

They tried to reason with him, acknowledging vocally that he -- Jesus -- was the Anointed One. Today, we might phrase the man's question as, "What problem do you have with me?" The spirits who had thrown off so many local men also acknowledge verbally that Jesus had the power to "torture" them, although "torture" may be used here in the sense of keeping them in suspense. Why had Jesus come? What was he going to do?

Now Jesus questioned him, "What is your name?" Now he said, "Legion," because many spirit beings had entered into him. And he advised him, so that he would not direct them to come out into the deep waters. Now there was a considerable herd of pigs that fed on the mountain. And they advised him, so that he would permit them to enter into them. And he allowed them to do so.

The man now called himself "Legion." A legion was a division of the Roman military consisting of several thousand people. Whether the man thought he had thousands of spirits in him, or whether this was an exaggeration on his part, we do not know. At any rate -- as evidenced by what happened next -- there were many of them.

At first, the man believed that Jesus was going to tell him to drown himself in the lake -- which would have eliminated the problem with the spirits. Then the spirits themselves spoke, asking to be sent into a herd of nearby pigs, and Jesus agreed.

Many commentators have questioned why there should be pigs being herded here, and we do not know the answer. Pigs were considered unclean animals, according to the Torah (Lev 11:1-8). It was forbidden even to touch the corpse of a pig (Lev 11:8), and so there should have been no purpose to raise pigs. Maybe they were being raised for the consumption of gentiles. Regardless of the purpose, it does seem that the swine herders should not have been raising pigs.

Now the spirit beings came out from the person and entered into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the cliff into the lake, and they drowned. Now when the swine herders noticed what happened, they fled, and they related it in the city and in the villages. Now they went out to see what happened, and they came to Jesus and found the person from whom the spirit beings had come out seated at Jesus' feet, clothed and of sound mind. And they were afraid.

The man himself did not wish to drown himself, but the many pigs -- once faced with spirit possession -- immediately did so. The men who were herding the pigs ran off to tell the people of Gersa what had transpired, also upset that their livelihood had been cut off. As a crowd gathered, Jesus offered the man clothing and food, which he accepted. Stunned, each of them noticed that

the man was perfectly happy and was listening to Jesus' teachings ("seated at his feet"). Therefore, the formerly possessed man accepted Jesus as the Anointed One and recognized the importance of his teachings, but the people were frightened at the power he had displayed.

Now those who had noticed it related how the person affected by the spirit beings was saved. And all the crowd of the surrounding countryside of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, because they were held by a great fear. Now after going into the ship, he returned. Now the man from whom the spirit beings had come out begged him to be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return into your house and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away heralding to the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

As Jesus taught the people around him, many of them (who were afraid) asked him to go back across the sea. The newly-restored man wanted to go with Jesus, again showing that he accepted both Jesus' identity and his teachings, but Jesus advised him to tell his household (his extended family) about how God's power -- manifest through Jesus -- had been directed to save him. In Jesus' wording, he de-emphasises his own role, saying only that the man should praise God. Rather than simply telling his household, the man set out to tell the whole city about Jesus the Messiah.

Now during Jesus' returning, the crowd received him, for they were all expecting him. And look! A man whose name was Yairos -- who existed as a ruler of the synagogue -- fell at Jesus' feet and advised him to enter into his house, because his unique daughter was about twelve years old, and she was dying.

Of the three synoptic accounts of Jesus' life, Markus' contains the greatest amount of detail on this incident, and so perhaps the author had personally obtained details not found in the others. Lukas' account more closely follows his source, Matthaiah's account.

The name of Yairos was probably reasonably well known in the area, and so the author mentions him as a witness to what transpired. Yairos asked for Jesus' intervention on behalf of his twelve year old daughter, and after Jesus agreed, he led Jesus to his house.

Now while he was led up, the crowds were pressing him. And a woman who had been in a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent her life-savings with healers, and whom no one was strong enough to cure came up to him from behind and touched the tuft of his cloak, and her flow of blood stood still immediately.

The phrasing, describing the woman as having "been in a flow of blood," would tend to indicate that the woman's problems were menstrual. Essentially, instead of stopping entirely, the woman's cycle appears only to have tapered off to a trickle each month. Under Jewish custom, following the Torah, this meant that the woman had been considered ritually unclean for the entire twelve years. Social customs would have considered her somehow responsible for the uncleanness.

This account demonstrates that even unknowingly, the Anointed One had more curative power than all of the medical community of the day. The fringes of a rabbi's garment were the place

thought to retain curative property -- if the rabbi was so endowed -- and when the woman touched them in faith, she was cured instantly.

And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched me?" But Peter, denying all things, said, "Master, the crowds are holding you and crowding you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I know that power went out from me." Now the woman, seeing that she was not going unnoticed, came trembling. And she fell down toward him and she related in the presence of all the people through what reason she had touched him and how she had been cured immediately. Now he said to her, "Daughter, your trust has saved you. Go into peace."

Jesus was entirely unaware of the incident, but he knew that he had been responsible for curing someone. Therefore, he asked the people nearest him in the crowd who had touched him. Even Peter denied that anything extraordinary had happened. After all, with so many people crowding around Jesus, people were surely bumping into him all the time!

The woman who had been healed of her condition knew that she had been discovered, and so she apologized for having touched Jesus without his consent. Jesus recognized that her trust in God was great and acknowledged to the crowd that a miracle had occurred, comforting the woman, so that she would be at peace.

The people around Jesus came to realize that God was with him through everything. Jesus did not have to make some sort of show in order to heal. He didn't even have to be aware of the healing! God was active through this greatest of prophets all of the time.

While he was speaking, someone from the synagogue-ruler's house came, saying, "Your daughter is dead. Do not bother the teacher any longer." But when Jesus heard, he answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only trust, and she will be saved."

Yairos was still leading Jesus to his house when the woman had approached him. At this time, messengers from Yairos' household approached with terrible news: that his daughter had died. Jesus spoke up immediately, comforting him with the words, "she will be saved." Yairos did indeed trust in God, for we see in the paragraphs to come that others doubted Jesus, but Yairos did not.

Now when he came into the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter and Johannes and Jacob and the father and mother of the child. Now all were crying and lamenting her, but he said, "Don't cry. For she is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

The order of the students again preserves the closeness of Peter's relationship with his friend Johannes. It also demonstrates that by this time Jesus had gathered to himself a circle of closest friends. Instead of leading a mob into the wake, Jesus selected his trusted companions to accompany him.

When Jesus and Yairos arrived at his home, they noticed the crowd gathering for his daughter's wake. Matthaiah notes that there were instruments being played, and everyone around was

crying. In the midst of this saddest of scenes -- the death of a beloved child -- Jesus entered and said she was only asleep. The bereaved relatives and servants treated him as though he were ignorant. After all, they had been there to know that she was dead, but Jesus had only arrived. The term "sleep" is occasionally used to mean "dead," and so here the term is ironic, for she was indeed asleep (dead) but would wake up from her sleep and so was only resting.

But he grasped her hand and intoned loudly, saying, "Child, arise," and her breath returned, and she stood up immediately. And he arranged for them to give her something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Markus' account gives the Aramaic phrase uttered by Jesus; Lukas records it only in Greek. Without any flourish or waving of his hands, Jesus merely told the twelve year old girl to get up. As though she had been merely sleeping, she woke up right away and had the strength to stand. She would need nourishment, and so Jesus asked that the family feed her. The fact that she ate would also show the crowds that she was no mere hallucination or spirit; the girl was alive. The parents now knew that Jesus must be the Anointed One, and so Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone, for it was not yet time for him to be revealed publically as Messiah.

XXII

9:1 *Now after calling together the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the spirit beings, and to cure diseases. And he sent them out to herald God's kingdom and to heal the sick. And he said to them,*

This is the Great Commission, during which the Twelve -- who represented the twelve tribes of Israel -- were to go out wherever Jewish people were and to carry the message of the spiritual Torah to them. Giving them such powers as he himself had demonstrated -- to cure the sick of diseases and of the influence of spirit beings -- Jesus sent them out with the signs of being his true envoys. Like Jesus, they would be official representatives of the new covenant.

"Take along nothing for the way: neither a rod, nor a pack, nor bread, nor silver, nor should you have two tunics. And into whatever house you enter, stay there and go out from there. And whoever should not receive you, when you are going out from that city, also shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony about them."

The account here is condensed from that in Matthaiah. Lukas has already named the Twelve, and so he does not name them here. That they were being sent to all Israel is implied, and so again Lukas does not state it. Lukas agrees with Matthaiah that the Twelve were instructed not to take a rod (staff) with them. A rod, pack, food, money, and spare clothing might be used by someone who was going to spend an extended period of time somewhere, but the Twelve were to take no such things. They were to be travelers, spending no more time than would be necessary to announce God's message, prove themselves with signs, and move on. The rabbis, too, acknowledged the carrying of certain objects into the temple (including some of those mentioned above) as being indicative of service other than to God (so Guzik); if the Twelve carried none of these they would be seen as devoted to God.

Shaking the dust from one's feet was a symbol. Some Jewish people would take this action after leaving a gentile city so as not to take anything from the city with them. The action represented the abandonment of the city, and in the Twelve's case may have indicated that they were treating its residents like gentiles. Notice that the mission of the Twelve was **not** to "convert everyone in the city." Instead, they were merely there to share the message; any "conversion" came from God. If people would not accept them, they were to go somewhere else quickly.

Now after going out, they traveled through the villages, announcing the good message and curing everywhere. Now Herod the Tetrarch heard all of what happened, and he was confused on account of the fact that it was said by some people that, "John has been raised from among the dead," but by others that, "Elijah has appeared," but by others that, "a prophet, one of the ancients, has stood up." And Herod said, "I beheaded John. Now who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

Lukas does not share with us the details of John the Baptizer's execution, and it is probable by this time that the event was well known. However, in reference to Herod Antipas' desire to see Jesus, mention of John's death was necessary. Various rumors were circulating about Jesus that made him out to be everything from a resurrected prophet to the return of Elijah. Since John's death had been personally seen to by Herod, he wanted to see Jesus -- someone who was responsible for stirring up the common people like John had done. According to what we have written, Herod had regretted executing John, and so it is quite feasible that he wanted to listen to Jesus' teachings. To our knowledge, though, he never did. The account is placed here merely to indicate that the Twelve were indeed spreading God's message, to the point that Herod himself heard about it.

And after returning, the envoys declared to him what they had done. And he took them aside and withdrew with his own people into a city that is called Beth-Saida. Now the crowds, knowing it, followed him. And, after receiving them, he spoke to them about God's kingdom, and he healed those who had need of being cured.

Now that the Twelve had been sent out formally by Jesus, Lukas uses the term "envoys." An envoy (Gk. ἀποστολος) was someone who had been sent out as an official representative of someone or something, usually identifying themselves with a signet, official papers, or another officially-recognized form of identification. The Twelve had the miraculous signs that confirmed who they were.

Several months later, the Twelve returned. The time may be either the Summer prior to Jesus' death or the preceding Fall. At this time, Jesus took his students into Beth-Saida, where they were followed by the crowds. Whereas earlier in this work, Lukas refers to Jesus as primarily healing people, here he primarily announces his message. The healings were secondary to the work that he must accomplish.

Now the daylight began to diminish. Now the Twelve came and said to him, "Make the crowd go away, so that they might go into the surrounding villages and farms, and might lodge and find provisions, because we are in a desert place here." But he said to them, "You give them food to

eat." But they said, "Not more than five loaves and two fish belong to us, unless we go and purchase food for all this group of people." (For there were about five thousand men.)

The Twelve recognized that they were carrying only enough food for themselves. Yet the crowd was enormous. So the Twelve asked Jesus to tell them to leave and find food and lodging for the coming night.

Jesus' reply must have stunned them: "You give them food to eat." They scrambled about, discovering that they had five loaves of bread and two small fish among them. Clearly, they couldn't do as Jesus expected them to do. So they asked him to allow them to go into town to buy food.

There were 5,000 men in the crowd. Including women and children, there might have been three times that number following Jesus. How could he possibly expect them to feed such a throng?

Now he said to his students, "Have them recline in groups of about fifty each." And they did so, and they had them all recline. Now he took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up into the sky, blessed them, and he broke them and gave them to the students to place around the crowd. And they ate, and all were well fed. And what fragments of them abounded were taken up, twelve baskets full.

Just as God had provided the manna while the Israelites wandered through the wilderness (Ex 16), so also God provided for the crowd following Jesus around. Then, it had been the people who had complained; here, Jesus' own students were wondering how the group might be able to eat. The promise of manna preceded the people "see[ing] Yahweh's glory" (Ex 16:7); this account precedes the important revelation of God's plan to Jesus' students.

Reclining (lying back) was one method of eating. Jesus asked that the crowd be broken into groups, and that each group be made to recline for the meal. Then came the miracle: Jesus asked God to bless the meal, and God provided for the crowd. As Jesus broke the bread and fish, giving to his students to distribute group-by-group, there always seemed to be more. And when the people were full, there were twelve baskets of food remaining!

When Elisha was prominent as a prophet (2 Kgs 4:1-7), he was responsible for a similar but lesser miracle. The daughter-in-law of one of the prophets, whose husband had died, asked for his assistance in paying off a debt, so that her children would not be taken as payment and enslaved. All she had was a jar of oil -- not nearly valuable enough to pay the full amount. Elisha called upon God's power to direct others to pour the oil from its jar into other (similar) jars -- until the original jar became empty. As it turned out, they had enough to fill every empty jar that they could find. She sold the oil, and she and her sons lived off of the profit from the sale. Jesus provided not oil but food, and there was an overabundance remaining -- well beyond anyone's need.

18 *And during a time when he was praying alone, it happened that the students were with him, and he asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say me to be?" Now they answered, saying, "John the Baptizer. But others say Elijah, but others say that a prophet, one of the ancients, has stood up."*

Jesus' students approached while he was praying. Seeing them there, he posed a question. The nature of this question concerned what others thought of him. The details of the answer harken back to what Herod Antipas himself had heard. Was Jesus really a resurrected John? Some thought so. Was he one of the prophets come back? Others believed it. All of them knew that he was from God, but most of them were confused as to his actual identity. Jesus had kept this secret, allowing them to interpret the passages about him in the Hebrew Bible but never addressing the matter directly.

Now he said to them, "But who do you say me to be?" Now Peter answered, saying, "God's Anointed One." But he censured them and charged them to tell this to no one, saying, "It is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the older people and high priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised up on the third day."

The second question does not concern popular opinion. His students had been learning from him for over a year. They had studied under him. They were privy to the meanings of his analogies. The Twelve had been anointed to take the message to others. Their perceptions of Jesus would surely tell if he was getting his message across.

Peter was the one who spoke up first. He was thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Anointed One, and of course he was right. Lukas summarizes Matthaiah's account, which includes further statements said to the Twelve. From this author's perspective, it was only important at the moment to point out first that his students knew that Jesus was the Anointed, and secondly that he had urged them not to tell anyone yet.

At this time also, he pointed out that it had been foretold that the Messiah would suffer, be killed, and be resurrected during the third day after his death. In Lukas' account, this is so far the most complete prediction of Jesus' death.

Now he said to all, "If someone wants to come after me, he should deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will destroy it, but whoever would destroy his life for my sake, this person will save it. For what is a person to profited who has gained the whole creation but has destroyed or forfeited himself?"

Leaving his place of seclusion, Jesus went to where the crowds who followed him were, and he addressed them. The use of "take up his cross" may be an indicator that God had already told Jesus what would be the instrument of his death. Convicted criminals of the most heinous sort could be sentenced to death by crucifixion. These criminals were nailed to a cross shaped like our letter "T". But prior to the nailing, they were made to carry the crossbar to the place where they would be crucified. This was a matter of public humiliation, showing the residents of the city that this criminal was about to be executed.

Being humble once in a lifetime isn't enough, for the teachings of Jesus were internal and spiritual. You could not simply act loving, or trusting, or loyal, or humble. It was necessary to be those things, and not just once in a while but always.

"Whoever wants to save his life..." is the person who puts himself ahead of God's message.

"Whoever would destroy his life for my sake..." is the person who puts God's teachings ahead of even his own life. Most people might have asked him, "What sense does it make to put something else ahead of your own life?" Jesus anticipated such a question, adding that it wouldn't make any sense to live your whole life, gaining everything that the world has to offer -- riches, physical pleasure, and comfort -- but then to lose your spiritual self. Your "self" (or "life" in Jewish usage, or "soul" in Greek usage) is, here, the deepest part of your being. It's who you really are. It would make no sense, Jesus said, to gain superficial things and to choose to forfeit what really matters. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize God's teachings ahead of everything else.

"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my sayings, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and the Father's and the holy messengers'. Now I am telling you truly: there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they should see God's kingdom."

Since Jesus' teachings rubbed many of the leaders the wrong way, many people were tempted to set aside his teachings and to continue to live in the rituals of religion. That would be the sort of person who, on account of putting his own comfort first, would wind up forfeiting his very self. Judgment on Israel was coming soon, and in that judgment only those who had acknowledged their Messiah would have access to God. That judgment was to come within the lifetimes of some of the people who were present. A "generation" normally signified a period of about 40 years. In this particular case, Jesus said these words in roughly 31 CE; the First Revolt (and beginning of the judgment) began c. 66 CE -- less than 40 years later.

XXIV

28 *Now about eight days after these sayings, it happened that he took aside Peter and Johannes and Jacob and went up into the mountain to pray. And during his praying, it happened that the form of his face was different, and his clothing was glowing white. And look: two men -- who were Moses and Elijah -- were speaking with him. They appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.*

This event is called the "Transfiguration," because Jesus and the others shone brightly -- they were physically transformed. Notice again that Lukas places Peter's and Johannes' names together.

"The mountain" is usually assumed here to be the Mountain of Olive Trees, although none of the accounts actually mentions the location. Second Peter calls the place "the holy mountain," and therefore the assumption is probably correct (since, contextually, Jesus was not near any holy site but frequented the Mount of Olive Trees).

Here, Lukas has received information from people other than Matthaiah. Both Matthaiah and Markus place the timing of the transfiguration exactly six days after the events described in the previous section. Lukas is unwilling to use the precise number, six, preferring instead to say that the timing was "about eight days" after the previous account -- an account that contains Peter's acknowledgement that Jesus was the Messiah. Of course, "six" fits with "about eight days," and so Lukas may simply have heard conflicting information about the timing of the event.

Even if Jesus did not yet know the full details of his own execution and resurrection, at this time he learned them. Not only are we told that this was their point of discussion, but also in the next encounter Jesus makes mention of it. Since, in that next account, everyone is confused by his prediction, it is certain at least that Jesus was not constantly talking about his death prior to this transfiguration.

Moses and Elijah are important figures to be appearing with Jesus. Elijah was one of only two men in the Hebrew Bible who did not die a physical death (Enoch was the other), and we are already aware that an Elijah figure was to return prior to the coming of the Messiah. That Elijah figure was John the Baptizer, but this is Elijah himself. Elijah had proven that Yahweh alone was God over Israel (see 1 Kgs 18, 2 Kgs 1). On the other hand, Moses was the great code-giver, bringing to Israel the very words of God that became the beginning of formal instruction. He had predicted that God would send a prophet like himself -- a friend of God who spoke to God face to face; the Anointed One was that prophet. Jesus was the successor both to Moses and to Elisha, who had received a double portion of Elijah's gift from God (2 Kgs 1f.). Their discussion with Jesus about his own fate demonstrated their testimony that Jesus was the Messiah.

Now Peter and those who were with him were burdened with sleep. But when they woke up, they noticed his glory and that of the two men who were standing with him. And during their departure from him, it happened that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is a nice thing for us to be here," and, "let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah," not knowing what he said. Now while he was speaking these things it happened that a cloud overshadowed them. Now they became afraid while entering into the cloud.

The time was the middle of the night, and although his closest associates had become accustomed to praying at length with Jesus, the lateness of the hour had caused them to fall asleep. As they revived, they saw Moses, Elijah, and Jesus shining brightly.

Their reaction was to offer to build tents for the three men. Even though Peter had just recognized Jesus as the Anointed One, he did not know what he was saying here, because only God was worthy of such a tent (of meeting, or "tabernacle," or "booth"). Still, Peter and the others got to witness some of the conversation between Jesus and the earlier prophets.

And a voice happened from the cloud, saying, "This is my son, the one who is chosen. Hear him."

The cloud reminds us of God's descent in a cloud over Mount Sinai, delivering the basic principles of the Torah to Moses. As this cloud descended, Yahweh God spoke as he had spoken at Jesus' baptism, identifying Jesus as the Anointed One. Therefore, in addition to Peter's own

profession of trust, three others -- Moses, Elijah, and God himself -- provided testimony as to Jesus' identity.

"Hear him" means "be taught by him." God pointed out personally that Jesus had been given the true understanding of the Torah (to which Moses also testified), and anyone who wanted to please God would need to understand God's instruction as Jesus explained it.

And when the voice had happened, Jesus was found alone. And they were silent, and no one related anything of what they had observed during those days.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah disappeared. With God providing his testimony and the conversation concluded, there was no longer any reason for them to be present. The event was stunning. Peter, Johannes, and Jacob were unable to tell anyone what they had seen, for they were in a state of awe. Matthaiah also reports that Jesus instructed them to tell no one until the time of his resurrection.

XXV

37 *Now on the next day it happened that when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. And look, a man from the crowd called out, saying, "Teacher, I beg you: look upon my son, because he is my unique one.*

"And look, a spirit takes him, and he calls out suddenly. And it causes him to have spasms with a foaming mouth, and after bruising him, it comes out from him with difficulty. And I begged your students, so that they would cast it out, and they were unable."

As Jesus rejoined the crowd, a man approached whose son was afflicted by a spirit being that caused him to have spasms similar to epilepsy. Many people believe that Jesus was being asked to heal the actual disease of epilepsy and was merely playing into the people's understanding (common in that day) that such diseases were caused by spirits.

Those members of the Twelve who had not gone with Jesus had tried to cure the boy's condition, but they were unable to do so -- even though they had been granted holy breath -- and so Jesus himself was called upon to help.

But Jesus answered, saying, "Oh distrusting and misdirected generation! How long will I be directed toward you and put up with you? Lead your son here." Now while he was coming toward him, the spirit being threw him down and caused him spasms. But Jesus censured the unclean spirit and healed the child, and he delivered him to his father. Now all were astonished at God's majesty. But while all were wondering about what Jesus did, he said to his students, "You place these sayings into your ears. For the Son of Man is about to be delivered up into sinners' hands." But they did not know the meaning of this declaration, and it was covered up from them, so that they would not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this declaration.

Jesus' comments here were directed to the crowd, although Matthaiah reports additional comments to his students. Here, we hear of Jesus' judgment of the spiritual state of his own generation, with Jesus almost expressing exasperation at dealing with their distrust. God had sent him out, directing him toward the common Jewish people of his day with a spiritual message, and yet they did not understand. Still, Jesus agreed to heal the man's son.

The people were able to see the boy's symptoms, and they witnessed the fact that Jesus had healed him. Therefore, they too should have been aware, even by this act alone, that Jesus was at least a great prophet. Through his teachings, they should have realized that he was the Anointed One.

Matthaiah reports that Jesus' students had been unable to cast out the disease because while they did trust God, their trust was little. Lukas focuses instead on the final admonition. With the discussion of his own death fresh in his mind, Jesus told his students that he would soon be handed over to "sinners" -- people who had departed from the Torah. Although Jesus asked them to listen carefully, they didn't understand this yet, because in their minds the Anointed One was not supposed to die. Although the statement didn't make sense, they didn't dare reveal their lack of understanding to him.

XXVI

46 Now a dispute entered among them: which one of them would be the greatest? But, noticing the dispute in their hearts, Jesus took a child, placed it near himself, and said to them, "Whoever would receive this child on my name is receiving me. And whoever receives me is receiving the one who sent me forth. For the one who exists as smallest among all of you, he will be great."

This is the first mention in Lukas' account of the notion of rank or authority among God's people. As indicated by the Twelve's lack of understanding of the saying about Jesus' death (section XXV), they were not ready yet to consider that God's kingdom under the Messiah was not going to be like an earthly kingdom. Ever since Saul, the notion of leadership in a kingdom had been positional. And so, the Twelve themselves were concerned with what status or rank they might have when Jesus' kingdom was established.

Matthaiah reports that their question to Jesus was phrased innocently, "Who is the greatest?" They didn't apply it to themselves, *necessarily*, but Jesus understood what they were asking about. Lukas' wording removes all doubt as to the nature of their question.

But Lukas preferred to leave the most direct part of the question -- the part that had applied to the Twelve alone -- out of the response. Instead of reporting that Jesus had told them that they must humble themselves like children (something that Lukas essentially reveals later), he skips to the general teaching.

Jesus himself had been humble, not coming to be served but to serve others. He had been like a small child in that respect, and his followers must imitate that attitude. If, as Jesus' follower, one can accept small children (here, receive them equally), then one is accepting Jesus as well (here, practicing his teachings). Consequently, that person also receives God.

Jesus' notion of equality is expressed as a reversal of fortunes for the popular notion of leadership. Who is the greatest? The humblest person of all. No, Jesus was not going to appoint someone to a position if he demonstrated humility! The point was that the whole concept of position needed to change. What people regard as greatness (authority over others) needed to be replaced by the idea of servitude -- caring humbly for the needs of others, with no desire for rank or authority.

Now Johannes answered, saying, "Master, we noticed someone casting out spirit beings in your name, and we are forbidding him, because he is not following with us." But Jesus said to him, "Don't forbid. For the one who is not against you is on your behalf."

The account attributed to Markus bears a similar event, which Matthaiah does not record, although Markus has other details added.

Someone had been casting out spirit beings, with power derived from honestly believing that Jesus was indeed the Anointed One. In short, the man trusted God. However, he was not a member of the Twelve, and so the Twelve rebuked him, telling that man not to continue in their activity.

But trust is trust, and so Jesus advised the Twelve to let the man continue. Although that man was not among the Twelve, he was spreading the truth and helping others -- just like they were doing. Therefore, he was not opposed to what the Twelve were doing and therefore was acting with them, as though part of the same team.

XXVII

51 *Now after the fulfillment of the days of his withdrawal, he set his mind on going into Jerusalem, and he sent out messengers ahead of his presence. And after going, they entered into a village of the Samaritans, so as to prepare for him. And they did not receive him, because his presence was going into Jerusalem. Now the students Jacob and Johannes noticed and said, "Lord, do you want for us to tell "fire to come down from the sky and consume them?"'" But he turned to them and censured them, and they went into a different village.*

A considerable time has now passed, during which Jesus appears to have traveled to Jerusalem only for the feasts. By now it is probably the Autumn prior to his death. Jesus will spend the next few months traveling around the area near Jerusalem. After that, he will enter the city for the last time (Part Four).

Jesus had passed through Samaria at least once before (Jn 4) and probably more frequently, but because he was going to Jerusalem, and on account of the rift between the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem and in Samaria, the Samaritans in a certain city refused to receive Jesus. If Jesus were heading to Jerusalem to participate in one of the feasts -- such as the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) in early autumn (which Jesus attended somewhat secretly in John 7) -- then the Samaritans would not have assisted him, since they believed that Mount Gerizim and not the temple was the appropriate place of worship.

Johannes and Jacob likened Jesus to Elijah at this point, taking what had happened to that prophet as a pattern of sorts. Elijah had been sent to meet with messengers from Samaria, to observe their godless state. When Ahaziah, who ruled from Samaria, later sent a military group, Elijah called on "fire to come down from the sky and consume" them (2 Kgs 1:2-10). This happened twice, but the third group were receptive and fearful. Jacob and Johannes appear to have regarded these particular Samaritans as being equally godless.

But Jesus censured them for their hasty (and possibly bigoted) conclusion, and reminded them that he had told them that if people would not accept them in one city, then they were to go to another.

And while they were going on the way, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you may go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to bow his head."

Since he had been rejected at one place, Jesus remarked that he had nowhere to sleep. But in the context of the person's remark, Jesus meant more than that. If someone wanted to follow Jesus, then they needed to realize that they too might be rejected. They too might feel as though they had "no place to bow their heads." This encounter and the two that follow consider the potential costs of being Jesus' student under the Priestly Judaism of the day.

Now he said to another, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, allow me to first go and bury my father." But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but you go tell the message of God's kingdom."

This saying sounds harsh from a modern American or European perspective, for it seems as though Jesus told this man to leave his father's corpse behind. Instead, we must consider the custom among these Jewish people that if one's relative were ill, then that person was free from all obligations. This custom arose from the Torah, where a person is not subject to military service (for example) under certain conditions. This man's father was ill, and his excuse for not doing right was that he was exempt.

Jesus replied that no one is exempt from doing what he knows is right. Because Jesus' time on earth was short, it was necessary for his students to spread the message about trust and love. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead" is talking about the inactivity of those who had rejected God -- those who were, metaphorically, "dead" in a spiritual sense. Let the inactive people who do not love God sit around waiting for death. God's student needs to be active, showing love to those who are alive.

Now another one also said, "I will follow you, Lord. But first allow me to arrange properly those things in my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one who has laid his hands on a plough and who looks at the things that are behind him is useful for God's kingdom."

This man was asking what again might have seemed to be a reasonable exception. Instead of helping Jesus at that time -- when Jesus needed him (these sections look ahead to 10:1) -- he

wished to delay. The man wanted to set his financial affairs in order. In simpler terms, he was concerned about physical things and had prioritized those things ahead of spiritual matters.

Jesus replied by saying that if someone wants to perform spiritual work and yet focuses on physical things, he cannot be useful for God's work. Jesus needed to gather a larger group around him to spread the message of trust and love. Such people needed to be committed to those principles.

XXVIII

10:1 *After these things, the Lord presented seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of his presence into each city and place where he was about to come. Now he said to them, "Indeed, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Lord of the Harvest, so that he would toss out workers into his harvest."*

The number, 72, is found in other manuscripts as 70. Both 70 and 72 appear to have been seen as representative of the number of Jewish scholars who had allegedly translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Called the *Septuagint* (from the word for 70), this translation was supposedly prepared by 70 scholars -- or by 72 scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes. So, just as the Twelve themselves were representative of the tribes of Israel, also the Seventy-Two (or Seventy) represented all of Israel.

The accounts of urgency in section XXVII indicate that Jesus was in the process of collecting together this group of 72 people. Since time was short, and since news about Jesus had now spread widely, Jesus thought to gather a larger group of students to spread the message into every city around Jerusalem where he might visit.

This "push" to spread the message prior to Jesus' departure is likened to a harvest, for the common people were ready now to listen to God's message.

"Go on. Look, I am sending you out like lambs in the midst of wolves. Do not take along a pouch, nor bag, nor sandals, and greet no one on the way. Now into whatever house you may enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace should be there, your peace will rest on him. But if not, it will return to you."

Jesus' prohibitions against taking along things that might cause his students to be viewed as seeking money or possessions applied also to the Seventy-Two. Here, though, they were not to take sandals, nor to greet anyone. This indicated Jesus' sense of urgency. With only a few months left until Jesus' death, there was very little time left to spread the message in advance.

If they needed to stay somewhere, they were to stay with believers in the spiritual Torah. These "sons of peace" -- peaceful people -- would receive them in peace, but others would not be so receptive. Therefore, their greeting of peace would not be received, and they should stay elsewhere.

"Now remain in this house, eating and drinking the meals with them. For the worker is worthy of his wage. Do not pass from house to house. And eat the things that are placed before you in whatever city you may enter (and they receive you), and cure those in it who are weak, and say to them, 'God's kingdom has drawn near to you.'"

If a city is open to the message, they are to stay in but one home while they are there. As official representatives sent directly by Jesus, their fellow students would know what an important task they were performing and would house and feed them in their travels. These receptive "sons of peace" will recognize that a person traveling from town to town, speedily and with no means of support, will need to have sustenance. The Seventy-Two, like the Twelve, were working directly as the Messiah had sent them to work, and so they were worthy of their "wage" -- enough food for them to survive.

Recognizing the generosity of the townspeople, the Seventy-Two were not to complain about what food was being freely given to them. Instead, they were advised to eat whatever was given to them. In return for such hospitality, they were to cure the sick (or weak) in any household that was so generous toward them.

"God's kingdom has drawn near" (or simply "neared") was to conclude their message. The time was rapidly approaching for Jesus to leave the land. After a transitional period, at the end of which Priestly Judaism was removed forever, only the new covenant would remain. The new covenant was to be an internal, spiritual covenant, determined not by physical things but by devotion to God. God's kingdom is wherever goodness reigns, and the era in which a physical kingdom (or nation) of Temple Israel would be replaced by a spiritual Israel on a permanent basis was about to be inaugurated.

To those who were receptive to a spiritual Torah, the message would be a welcome parting greeting from the Seventy-Two as they went on their way.

"But in whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, come out into its open places and say, 'Even the dust from your city that is sticking to us, we will wipe from our feet for you. However, know this: that God's kingdom has drawn near.' I am telling you that in that day Sodom will be more tolerated than that city."

Again similar to the manner in which the Twelve were to act, the Seventy-Two were to leave an unreceptive city by "shaking the dust from their feet," but they were not to neglect informing such a city that the time of judgment on Israel was coming soon.

Jesus' comment about Sodom begins a list of "woes" or exclamations of pity about certain cities. Sodom had rejected two of God's messengers, and there were fewer than ten godly (just) people in the city (see Gen 18-19), but a city that rejected God's Anointed One would be treated even more harshly in the coming judgment.

"Woe to you, Chorazin; woe to you, Beth-Saida, because if the powers that are being done among you had been worked out in Ture and Sidon, they would have sat down and changed their minds long ago, in sackcloth and ashes! However, it will be more tolerable for Ture and Sidon"

than for you in the judgment. And you, Kafar-Nahum, will you be elevated up to heaven? You will be bringing yourselves down to Hades!

Ezekiel had attempted to persuade the gentile cities of Sidon and Ture to turn to God (Ezek 26-28), but had they seen as many miracles as Jesus had performed among the cities of Galilaiah (represented here by Chorazin and Beth-Saida), Jesus says that all of them would have turned to God. Therefore, their citizens who were unrelenting in their rejection of the Messiah would not be spared. Alas! "Sackcloth and ashes" was symbolic of humility, and these gentile cities would have shown the humility that Galilaiah lacked.

Being "elevated to heaven" was a metaphor for ultimate prosperity. Would Kafar-Nahum, a prosperous town, be brought to greatest prosperity? They would have liked that. But no, if they rejected the Anointed One, they would be causing their own doom. In the same metaphor, they would be digging their own graves (Hades in Greek is read for She'ol in Hebrew, which signifies the grave). Anyone who chooses physical wealth over spiritual wealth is digging his own grave.

"The one who hears you is hearing me, and the one who rejects you is rejecting me. Now the one who rejects me is rejecting the one who sent me out."

The Seventy-Two were **heralds**. As officially-designated representatives, anyone who listened to their message was listening to the same message given by Jesus and therefore was heeding the words of the Anointed. Anyone who rejected them was similarly rejecting Jesus, and so he adds that whoever rejects the Messiah -- especially after having seen so many miraculous confirming signs -- would be rejecting God as well.

17 *Now the Seventy-Two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the spirit beings submit to us in your name." Now he said to them, "I watched the Enemy after he fell out of the sky like lightning. Look, I have given you the authority to step on serpents and scorpions, and the authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will do wrong to you by any means. However, do not rejoice in this (that the spirits submit to you). But rejoice that your names have been inscribed in the heavens."*

The Seventy-Two had also received the authority to resist spirit beings, be free from the harm of poisons, and to resist anything that their opponents might throw at them. As they began to go out, they returned pleased that they were able to perform such miracles. Jesus renewed their focus, saying that they should not rejoice over the miraculous signs that confirmed the message but over the fact that they themselves had received the message. In living by the spiritual Torah of love and trust, they had become part of God's family, and that was a matter for joy.

In that hour, he exulted in the spirit and said, "I fully acknowledge you, Father, Lord of Heaven and of the earth, because after hiding the things from wise and intelligent people, you also revealed them to babies. Yes Father, because in this way it happened to be a delight in your sight."

The message had been revealed only piecemeal prior to God's sending Jesus. Although basic lessons about right and wrong began in Eden (Gen 2-3), and although the Torah had always

contained the principles, it was only now -- through the Messiah -- that God was revealing the wonderful spiritual teachings. And he was revealing them not to the "wise and intelligent" -- not to those who had studied to become leaders of the great religious tradition -- but to "babies." These were people who were only beginning to learn about God, and yet they were receptive to the true instruction. Jesus rejoiced upon hearing that the Seventy-Two were performing signs because it indicated that there were trusting people in the land.

"All things are given to me by my Father, and no one knows who the son is except the Father. And no one knows who the Father is except the son, and the one to whom the son might wish to reveal him."

The coming of the Anointed One was a blessed event all by itself. All of the power to perform miracles that the people had seen had been given to the Messiah to confirm the spiritual truths. So close was his relationship to God that by comparison, no one else really knew God. But the Messiah could reveal God to others also, and he was revealing him -- through his teachings. Whoever listened to Jesus and practiced trust and love was also becoming close to God, for these attributes are the core of God's nature.

23 *And turning to his students by himself, he said, "Blessed are those eyes that see what you are seeing. For I am telling you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you are seeing, and they did not see, and to hear what you are hearing, and they did not hear."*

Now Jesus had been revealing God to his students, through his teachings as confirmed by miraculous signs. So at this time he turned to them and remarked that they were blessed in being able to observe what they had seen. The many prophets and kings who had hoped to see the coming of the Messiah were those mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and no doubt some who came after that time. Jesus says that they were all looking forward to the Messiah, for the Messiah had been central to God's plan since the beginning. In John's account, Jesus says also that Abraham looked ahead and rejoiced that the Anointed One was going to come.

25 *And look, a certain lawyer stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But he said to him, "What was written in the Torah? How do you read it?" Now he answered, saying, "'You will love Yahweh your God out of the whole of your heart, and with the whole of your soul, and with the whole of your strength, and with the whole of your mind,' and, 'You will love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

This is the summary of the Torah, which constitutes the whole purpose and duty of humanity. Some rabbinical scholars debated as to which of the precepts in the Torah (of which some say there are 613) was the most important. Which were most necessary, and which were important for other reasons? This time, the question was asked to him as, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' response needed to come from the Hebrew Bible; otherwise, he would have been called into question as a teacher. Yet if he answered from the Torah, then his interpretation of the Torah might be questioned.

It appears like Jesus simply echoed back what the other man said. I.e., "Well, what do YOU think? Oh, I think that, too." But actually Jesus' answer sets him up to be questioned further. The

inquisitioner could have said anything at that point. When Jesus pointed him to the Torah, the man was able to direct Jesus to passages about which he had further things to say. More simply, the question that follows is the lawyer's true question, which was intended to trap Jesus.

Jesus had been emphasizing love (although Lukas has only revealed it to his readers sparsely so far), and so the quotations from Dt 6:5 and Lv 19:18 were expected, but what did the lawyer really have in mind when he approached Jesus?

"Now he said to him, 'You have answered rightly. Do this and you will live.' But, wanting to justify himself, he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

When Jesus affirmed that love was indeed the summation of the Torah, the lawyer revealed his true intentions. The Torah simply said, *"You will not hate your brother in your heart, but you will reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin on account of him. You will not take revenge or carry a grudge against the sons of your people, but you will love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh."* (Lv 19:17-18)

Who is deserving of such loving treatment? One's closest friends? There would be an answer to that. One's circle of associates? The lawyer would have an answer to that as well. Everyone in Israel? The lawyer might argue that this is unreasonable. Where exactly does one draw the line? And if it could not be determined, "who is my neighbor," how could Jesus apply his principle of love? This was a well-posed question for a rabbi such as Jesus.

Replying, Jesus said, 'A certain person was going down from Jerusalem into Jericho, and he fell among robbers. After they both stripped him and inflicted him with punches, they departed, leaving him half-dead.'

Although we do not have much information regarding the road to Jericho, it is said that bandits would crouch in wait for unsuspecting travelers who journeyed unprotected, taking their possessions and sometimes killing them. Jesus describes a potential situation that might very well become real: a man is waylaid and nearly killed on the road by bandits.

"Now by chance a certain priest was doing down by that road, and noticing him, he passed him by. Now similarly, a Levite also who happened near the place, upon coming and noticing, he passed him by. But a certain Samaritan who was traveling came near him and noticed, and he felt compassion. And he went near and bound his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Now after placing him on his own animal, he led him into an inn, and he cared for him."

The priests and Levites were central figures in temple Judaism. Who might be expected to help an dying man, if not such a respected figure? In Jesus' story, these leaders noticed the man dying but continued on their way, not wishing to get involved. Perhaps they considered themselves too busy, or quite possibly -- like the lawyer himself -- they did not consider the injured man to be their "neighbor."

Lukas has already illustrated (through the words of Johannes and Jacob) the disdain that was felt toward Samaritans. Samaritan women were particularly avoided (see comments on John 4), but

all Samaritans were distrusted for philosophical and ethnic reasons. Some Samaritans had married into gentile families, and the Samaritans believed that only the Torah and not the Prophets were to be regarded as holy writings. Consequently, since the Torah does not mention the temple in Jerusalem, they did not regard it as an appropriate place of worship but instead worshipped at nearby Mount Gerizim (which is featured on Samaritan coinage). Palestinian Jewish leaders were particularly biased against Samaritans.

And so, it is this "Good Samaritan" who dared to approach the dying man. He cleansed and bound the man's wounds -- to save his life and prevent infection. Then he put the man on his own animal, while he himself walked, and led the injured man to town. After that, he paid for the man's care at an inn.

"And on the next day, after taking out two denarii, he gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Care for him, and when I come back, I will repay you whatever you should expend.'"

Finally, since the man's injuries were so extensive that he did not recover while the Samaritan was there, he left word to spare no expense to heal the injured man -- a stranger.

"Now which of the three of them seems to you to have become a neighbor of the one who fell into robbers?" Now he said, "The one who did the merciful thing for him." Now Jesus said, "Go, and you do likewise."

The issue, then, is not "who is my neighbor," but "to whom am I neighborly?" That provision in the Torah was not written in order to define who might be worthy of our care, says Jesus, but to indicate what sort of attitude we ought to have. Instead of being hateful, we ought to be neighborly. If **we** are good neighbors all of the time, then the question, "who is our neighbor," is not relevant.

And so, in the analogy, the most unlikely of persons -- the Samaritan -- proved to be the only one who was following the intent of the Torah, for it was he who had become a neighbor to the wounded man. But Jesus' admonition was that the "love your neighbor" principle applied to everyone. So, "go, and you do likewise."

XXIX

38 *Now while they were going, he entered into a certain village. Now a certain woman named Martha received him. And hers was a sister called Miriam, who also sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. But Martha was confused about her much table service. Now she stood by, saying, "Lord, Doesn't it concern you that my sister has abandoned me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her that she should assist with me."*

It is probable that the village was Bethany, and that the Martha and Miriam mentioned here were the sisters of Lazaros, whom Jesus raised from the dead. The event described here appears to have taken place before Lazaros became ill.

As women, Miriam and Martha were expected to serve the men as they listened to Jesus' teachings. Women were not obliged to learn all of the teachings in the Torah, and by this time, certain rabbis were proposing that women should never be allowed to learn the Torah.

Along these lines, Rabbi Eliezer of the 1st century wrote:

"Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman." He also wrote, "Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity."

These teachings are from the Mishnah, Sotah: (3,4).

Therefore, it was socially a shock when Miriam began to sit at Jesus' feet -- a term that indicated studying with a teacher. She was receiving instruction from Jesus, as it was unacceptable for women to do.

It is now no surprise that her sister was upset, for Martha saw Miriam as neglecting her duties as a woman. Her request that Jesus advise her to return to her work is something that makes sense within its social context.

But the Lord answered, saying to her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and you are troubled about many things! But there is need of one thing. For Miriam has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

By contrast, Jesus' calm reaction is quite surprising. Instead of following the traditions of the day and reinforcing the gender roles, Jesus essentially nullified those roles by not only allowing Miriam to study under him but by also indicating that the choice was hers to make and that she had made the best decision. This is another account included by Lukas which promotes the equality of the sexes.

Whereas Martha frequently worried "about many things," Miriam had discovered the "one thing" that ought to have been a matter of concern in life: the spiritual teachings of Love and Trust -- as Lukas has just related them to us (section XXVIII).

XXX

This section, which Matthaiah infuses into what is commonly called the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5-7), elaborates on the thoughts about how to live one's life that Lukas has only just mentioned for his reader.

11:1 *Now during a time when he was in a certain place praying, it happened as he stopped that a certain one of his students said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his students." Now he said to them, "When you pray, say:*

"O Father, your name has been made holy.

"Let your kingdom come.

"Give us the bread we need today,

"And forgive us of our sins. For we ourselves also forgive each one who is indebted to

us.

"And do not lead us into trial."

We do not know what John the Baptizer taught his students about prayer, for nothing has been recorded. However, we do have Jesus' response to his student's request. Since several of Jesus' students had been students of John as well, the request is a natural one.

Lukas summarizes the example called the "Lord's Prayer," which is found in full in Matthaiah's version. The points retained by Lukas are these:

"Your name has been made holy." -- This praises an attribute of God. Remember, this praise is supposed to be genuine, if we believe everything Jesus has said so far.

"Let your kingdom come." -- Here, Jesus humbly submits his own desires to God's will. His students, too, should submit their desires to whatever God might want for their lives.

"Give us the bread we need today" -- Literally, "daily bread," this refers to what is necessary to survive. Some translate "necessary food" here. Give us what we NEED. He doesn't address God as Santa Claus. He asks for what he really needs, and so his students should recognize their own needs and submit them to God, knowing that he will provide.

"forgive us our sins. For we ourselves also forgive each one who is indebted to us." -- Now THIS is tough! Jesus tells his students to ask for as much forgiveness as they have shown others! Not merely saying, "Forgive," Jesus makes it conditional on our own forgiveness.

"And don't lead us into trial." -- This echoes many of the Davidic Psalms. Jesus has recognized that God is in control. He has praised God for who he is. Now, he looks to God for guidance through his daily life...in the matters that are most important. Jesus has continued to speak in the plural so as to include all of his listeners.

And he said to them, "Who among you would have a friend and would go to him at midnight, and would say this to him:

'Friend, lend me three loaves, for my friend has happened by me from his way, and I have nothing to place before him.' And he, answering from inside, would say, 'Don't cause me trouble. The door has been closed already, and my children are with me in bed. I am unable to get up to give to you.'

Which of your friends would refuse to help you since he was already in bed? This is how it is when you ask of God. God is always busy, and yet we are always asking him for help. Would God simply send us away?

"I am telling you, if he will not even get up and give to him on account of being his friend, indeed on account of his relentlessness, he will rise up and give him as much as he needs."

On the contrary, just as your human friends would do whatever they can do to help you, if you persist, because they are your friends, so also God would help you whenever you need it.

Now, the passage does not say that if you want something selfishly, you'll receive it. Nor does it say that your answer from God will always follow your expectations. But God is like a friend who looks out for your best interests.

"And I am telling you:

"Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and the one who seeks, finds, and it is opened to the one who knocks.

Since God will help us whenever we require it, we ought to ask. If we want to learn something, we ought to pray to God, seeking whatever we need. If opportunities are closed to us, and if those opportunities are for good, we ought to ask God to open a door for us. Why? Because Yahweh will provide: everyone who asks, receives. And so it only makes sense to seek God and ask him for help in times of need.

"Now what father from among you, if a son asks for a fish, would he provide a serpent instead of a fish? Or also, if he should ask for an egg, would he supply him with a scorpion? Therefore, if you who exist as evil people know to give good gifts to your children, how much rather will the father from Heaven give holy breath to those who ask him?"

Would even an evil father play a harmful trick on his beloved child? No. If even the evil "know to give good gifts" to their children, then of course God -- who defines what is good -- will give good things to his children. The person who truly follows God may receive even a miracle ("holy breath") if only he asks. So great is the love of God compared with the human understanding of love.

14 *And he was casting out a spirit being, and it was one of muteness. Now after the spirit being came out, it happened that the mute person spoke, and the crowds wondered. But certain ones from among them said, "He is casting out the spirit beings by Ba'al Zebul, the ruler of the spirit beings!" But others, testing, sought from him a sign from heaven.*

This section may be considered as a portion of Part Three, for it introduces those who were still demanding more miracles from Jesus in order to prove his identity. Even right after casting out a spirit being, some were demanding more signs, while others were insisting that Ba'al Zebul was the source of his control over spirits.

Ba'al Zebub, in 2 Kings 1:2, appears to be a mocking corruption for Ba'al Zebul. Whereas Ba'al Zebul means "lord of the mansion" (i.e., the divine abode), the play on words Ba'al Zebub means "lord of the flies." Ba'al Zebul (Zebub) was a god of Ekron, from whom King Ahaziah sought assistance (in preference to requesting help from Yahweh). Lukas has already referred to that account from another angle when he mentioned Johannes' and Jacob's desire to have fire consume the Samaritans.

We know essentially nothing about Ba'al Zebul, except for what is said in the Bible. Ba'al Zebul is not equal to the Enemy ("Satan"), but is certainly considered a part of the Enemy's forces because he works in opposition to God. Some people, then, were accusing their Messiah of working against God.

Now, knowing their minds, he said to them, "Every kingdom that is divided against itself is made desolate, and house divided against house falls. Now if also the Enemy is divided against

himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you are saying me to be casting out the spirit beings by Ba'al Zebul. But if I by Ba'al Zebul I am casting out the spirit beings, by whom do your sons cast them out? On account of this, they will be your judges.

If indeed Jesus were casting out spirit beings by Ba'al Zebul, apparently the lord of spirits, then the Enemy's kingdom would be divided (working) against itself. The very idea is ridiculous.

On the other hand, if Jesus were casting out spirit beings through Ba'al Zebul, "by whom do your sons cast them out"? Were the children (or followers) of the Jewish leaders casting out spirit beings? We do not know. But Jesus is basically saying that if anyone is able to do this -- even their own children (or, in metaphor, their followers) -- then it must happen through the power given by God to his Anointed One. Therefore, if any of them were able to do it, they were doing it in the Messiah's name. Consequently, the fact that these others recognized the Anointed One would serve to judge those who (knowingly) rejected him.

"But if by God's finger I am casting out the spirit beings, God's kingdom has reached you.

If indeed they would realize that God's power was evident in Jesus, then finally perhaps they would open up to God's kingdom. They might finally learn what he had been trying to teach.

"When the strong one who is armed guards his palace, his possessions are at peace. But whenever one stronger than he comes up and overcomes him, he takes away his full armament, about which he was persuaded, and they distribute his spoils. The one who is not with me is against me, and the one who is not gathering with me is scattering.

This is a prediction of the end of Priestly Judaism. The leaders have been closely guarding what they have -- their traditions, the Torah, the temple, and the rest of their way of life. But the Anointed One, with the power of God behind him, is about to establish his spiritual kingdom and to overturn Priestly Judaism. Therefore, any Jewish person was either helping Jesus gather followers or was in opposition.

"When the unclean spirit comes out from a human being, it passes through arid places, seeking a resting place. And when not finding one, then it says, 'I will return to my house, from which I came out.' And when it comes, it finds it swept clean and adorned. Then it goes and it takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person has become worse than the first."

As in Matthaiah, this segment is concerned with those leaders who were demanding signs of Jesus and is not really about spirit beings. In their insistence that they had not seen enough signs to demonstrate Jesus' identity, the leaders had proven that they were part of what Jesus calls "an evil and adulterous generation" -- a generation of people who had left God. This analogy identifies the problem with the leaders' religious system.

Throughout the centuries, the Jewish people had struggled with idolatry, which, in this analogy, is the unclean spirit. Finally, after returning from the Exile, they eradicated the idolatry from their midst. But what replaced it? A system of rituals and rabbinical opinions that obscured the

fact that true spirituality and worship were internal and spiritual. Jesus refers to this as the return of idolatry. The system of ritual religion -- any such system -- is seven (or eight) times more idolatrous than the idolatry of the previous times.

Therefore, the Jewish people were far worse off under their ritual religion than they had been when they struggled with bowing to idols.

Now while he was saying these things, it happened that a certain woman lifted up her voice from out of the crowd and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and blessed are the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear God's message and who guard it."

A woman interrupted to praise Jesus' mother for having brought him into the world. No, says Jesus. The people who are worthy of praise are those who accept the message. Those who practice love and trust -- those people are truly blessed. This stands in contrast to the people who remain in ritual religion -- who would have been far better off worshipping idols.

Part Three

XXXI

29 *Now as the crowds were collecting together, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and a sign will not be given to it, except for the sign of Yonah. For just as Yonah happened as a sign to the Ninevites, in the same way the Son of Man will also be a sign to this generation."*

Part Three begins with an end of signs and pronouncement of judgment. In this part, the conflict between Jesus and his opponents in the religious leadership escalates, and Jesus' comments address that conflict. As in Johannes' account, a sharper dichotomy is drawn between those who accept Jesus' spiritualized Torah and those who do not. Jesus also describes what his kingdom is like.

This section marks the end of signs. Rather than providing signs for a generation that had already seen enough signs necessary to believe, Jesus indicates that the signs will end. The "sign of Yonah" will be Jesus' time in the grave. For just as Yonah was caused by God to be swallowed by a great fish, spent time inside the fish, and was caused again by God to return to a normal life, so also Jesus would be killed, buried, and raised. Jesus implies that Yonah's experience was part of what he told the Ninevites when he informed them that their doom was coming (Jon 3:5). Yonah forecast the doom of the Ninevites -- provided that they did not change their minds -- and Jesus was predicting an end to Priestly Judaism. His point here is that his own death and subsequent resurrection would be the only remaining "sign" that he would give them to prove that the desolation of the temple was coming.

"The southern queen will be raised up in the judgment with the men of this generation and will condemn them. Because she came from the outlying areas of the land to hear Solomon's wisdom, and look: greater than Solomon is here.

The Queen of Sheba was not Jewish, and yet she realized that Solomon's wisdom was a gift of God (1 Kgs 4:29). Therefore, she listened to Solomon's words (1 Kgs 10:1ff.). Although she tested him, her mind was open to the truth, and she praised Yahweh for having brought him (1 Kgs 10:9).

On the other hand, the Anointed One was greater than Solomon, and the Jewish leaders did not receive him. Therefore, metaphorically, the gentile Queen of Sheba would judge the leaders. This judgment would come in the fact that her acceptance of God's servant was known to them.

"Ninevite men will stand up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it. Because they changed their minds at Yonah's heralding, and look: greater than Yonah is here.

The Ninevites -- also gentiles -- had heard of Yonah. So when they received "the sign of Yonah" and heard his announcement of judgment, they changed their minds and turned to follow God. And yet these Jewish leaders were not going to listen -- even after Jesus was raised from the dead. In the same metaphor as above, the Ninevites' attitude would be a cause for judging those who had heard Jesus and rejected him.

"No one who has lit a lamp places it into a secret place, ° but on the lampstand, so that the ones who go in might see the light. The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is sound, the whole body is also enlightened. But when it is evil, the body is also darkened. Therefore, if your whole body is enlightened, not having any part darkened, the whole will be enlightened, like when the lamp enlightens you with its radiance."

The manuscripts p⁴⁵ and p⁷⁵, each no earlier than the III century, omit the phrase "nor under a measure of grain." Therefore, the phrase is omitted in translation here.

What is it that enlightens or darkens your body? Jesus says that it is "your eye." The word "eye" is used as a metaphor for someone's desires. What do you look for? What do you seek to obtain? If you look for good things, then your entire self will be "enlightened" by your goodness -- just as a lamp enlightens a house.

Does it have to be that way? Isn't it possible to desire evil things and still be enlightened by goodness? No. For every lamp is always placed in a place where it will enlighten the whole house, and your eye is like a lamp. In other words, your desires are the very thing that reflect your character.

This section connects with the previous one because the people who were demanding things of Jesus were not trying to uncover the truth. In fact, by this time, the leaders had begun to try to trap Jesus with whatever he said and did. The notion of evil desires also extends into the next event.

Now while he was speaking, a Perush asked him, so that he might have dinner with him. Now he entered and reclined. Now the Perush noticed, and he wondered, because he did not first ritually cleanse before the dinner. But the Lord said to him, "Now you Perushim cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, but your insides are filled with plunder and evil. Mindless people! Didn't the one who made the outside also make the inside? However, give the things that are within as charitable deeds, and look, all of you is clean!"

Prior to participating in a dinner, it was customary to engage in a ritual washing of the hands. This was not a physical cleansing -- to stave off germs or contamination -- but was performed for the sake of not causing ceremonial contamination. As Markus notes, this was not in the Torah but constituted a portion of "the tradition of the older people" -- things that had been handed down from the previous generation and which were held to have been passed down by Moses through various rabbinical ancestors and prophets. One source (David Guzik, citing Trapp) reports that Rabbi Jose of Galilaiah said of their ceremonial cleansing, "Whoever eats with unwashed hands is sinning as much as the one who sleeps with a prostitute."

In some circles, it was said that a certain spirit being who contaminated the hands was able to contaminate the food of anyone who had not been ritually cleansed. The cleansing involved washing first the fingers, then the hands, and then the rest of the forearm, allowing the water to drip down and off of the elbow. Some practiced the additional step of then washing the forearm, then the hands, and then the fingertips. Additionally, some people cleansed themselves after every course of a meal. Failure to cleanse one's self prior to a meal was considered grounds for expulsion, and it is said that Rabbi Aqiba (II century) preferred rather to dehydrate than to fail to cleanse himself ceremonially.

In the midst of such tradition, Jesus had instructed his students that such actions were not important. The Perushim objected to his treatment of their traditions.

"You...cleanses the inside of the cup" refers to their ritual washings, but moreso, Jesus' comment attacks the whole notion of what we call religious observance. Ritual religion, in which people perform various actions that are said to please God, is nothing here except for "washing the outside of a cup." Jesus said that if the inside is clean, then the whole person is clean. In other words, Jesus internalizes their notion of religion. God never intended to create religious practices (meetings, rituals, special words); instead, the practices in the Hebrew Bible were supposed to point to spiritual principles. By focusing on actions and words rather than attitudes, the Perushim had missed the whole point of the Torah. Instead of consuming themselves with rituals, the Perushim should have been giving themselves -- internally -- to helping others (acts of charity). Showing a genuine love for others makes a person clean.

"But woe to you Perushim! Because you give a tenth from the mint and the rue, and every kind of shrub, and you bypass the justice and the love of God! But it is necessary for you to have done the latter things, and not to put off the former ones!"

God had told the citizens of Israel to provide one tenth of their goods to support the priests and Levites. However, even that support needed to come from the heart. Therefore, in focusing on

externals, the Perushim had neglected God's spiritual concepts -- such as justice and love. To practice love and justice are necessary.

"Woe to you Perushim! Because you love the front seats in the gatherings and the greetings in the marketplaces.

Matthaiah's account (Mt 23:1-12) adds here a condemnation of the notion of positional leadership among God's people, for it was their desire to be superior and to control others that gave rise to the rabbinical system. This "pomp of position" was a woe (or sorrow) for the Perushim, for as long as they valued positions they would never find a place in the kingdom of God.

"Woe to you, because you are like those unseen tombs, and the people walk about on top of them, unknowingly."

The analogy here is similar to that of the "cup that is clean on the outside." On the surface, an unmarked grave looks like ordinary grassland, but in reality the grave contains a corpse. Similarly, the practitioners of ritual religion are corpses inside, but they appear perfectly well. Consequently, anyone who listens to the teachings of ritual religion is like someone who accidentally walking on a grave -- he doesn't realize that death is within.

But a certain one of the lawyers answered, saying to him, "Teacher, in saying these things, you are reproaching us also."

The teachers of the Torah -- lawyers -- were not pleased with Jesus' attack on the Perushim, but they tolerated it. However, since they too advocated ritual religion, this new direct attack was a reproach to them also. When this was said, it appears as though they were hoping that Jesus might apologize to them, saying that he did not intend to include them in the reproach.

Now he said, "And woe to you lawyers! Because you load up people with oppressive loads, and you yourselves do not reach for the burdens with one of your fingers."

Instead of apologizing, Jesus attacked the law-teachers as well. In creating legal interpretations of Biblical issues, they taught that the interpretation was as important as (or more important than) what the Hebrew Bible actually said. We might call these people "creed makers" today. Jesus likens their role to giving people heavy loads without offering anything by way of assistance. So it is with all ritual religion, which provides rules and structure but no genuine access to God.

"Who to you, because you construct the tombs of the prophets, but your ancestors killed them. Indeed, you are witnesses and you consent together to the deeds of your ancestors, because indeed, they killed them, but you are constructing."

The Jerusalem (Palestinian) Gemara, part of the Talmud, indicates that there is no need to build monuments to the righteous because their sayings are testimony enough. Here, the lawyers are portrayed as building monuments to the dead prophets -- the prophets that their ancestors

murdered. In their expositions of the Torah, they *seemed* to be honoring the prophets. However, in reality the creation of ritual religion was a participation in the murder of the prophets.

On account of this also, God's wisdom said:

"I will send prophets and envoys to them, and from among them, they will kill some, and they will persecute some," so that the blood of all the prophets that was shed from the laying down of creation would be sought out from this generation: from Abel's blood until Zechariah's blood, who was destroyed between the place of sacrifice and the house. Yes, I am telling you, it will be sought out from this generation!

The saying is unknown but appears to be a forward-looking version of Jer 7:25-6, *"From the day that your ancestors left the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent out all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. Yet they did not listen to me, nor lend their ears, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did.* The saying quoted here seems to be a prediction that God gave to Jesus about his own generation.

Since the prophecy deals with Jesus' own generation, Benjamin Wilson places the account of Zechariah in the future, identifying him with a certain Zechariah who died at the altar in about 67 CE. That is, he interprets the expression "from Abel's blood until Zechariah's blood" temporally - from the first just person who was murdered until the last one who was to die before the judgment on Israel was complete.

On the other hand, the majority view is that the Zechariah intended here was the one mentioned in 2 Chr 24:20-22, Zechariah, the son of Yehoiada, who did indeed die "in the court of Yahweh's house" (v. 21). This opinion favors the son of Yehoiada because in the complete Hebrew Bible, 2 Chronicles is the last book, making "from Abel to Zechariah" encompass everyone in the Hebrew Bible.

There are problems with this view as well. First of all, every known manuscript of 2 Chronicles gives Zechariah's father as Yehoiada, but Matthaiah's account of this saying by Jesus gives his father as Berachiah. Also, the Writings -- the third section of the Hebrew Bible -- was still an open collection at the time of Jesus; even the order of the later books was not yet standardized.

Therefore, some have proposed that either Matthaiah's account was altered very early or that the son of Berachiah, who was the **prophet** Zechariah (Zech 1:1) was meant. The present author considers this to be the likely case. First, there are no variants found in Matthaiah's account, and so we should consider "Berachiah" to be the proper reading. Secondly, in the Prophets -- the most recent collection of the Hebrew Bible which had been finalized at the time of Jesus, Zechariah would be the "last" prophet to be slain.

Finally, Zechariah's murder was mentioned in the Targum (paraphrase/commentary) of Yonathan ben-Uziel, who was a contemporary to Jesus. In his comments on Lamentations 2:20, Yonathan said, "Was it good for you to murder a prophet like you did Zechariah -- the descendant of Hiddo -- in the house of Yahweh's sanctuary...?" Therefore, we have also an account that Zechariah the prophet was murdered as Jesus described.

We do not need to know the identity of this Zechariah, however, in order to understand the thrust of Jesus' statement. The judgment on Israel's leaders this time was to be so severe that it would punish them for the killing of every prophet who had ever been murdered by their ancestors.

"Woe to you lawyers! Because you took away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter in, and you have hindered those who come in."

In offering the people ritual religion instead of the spiritual Torah, the lawyers had taken away "the key of knowledge." Without the spiritual interpretation, people could never understand the Torah. Therefore, not only did they themselves not understand, but also they prevented everyone else from comprehending it.

After coming out from there, the scribes and the Perushim began to hold on terribly to anger and to draw statements from his mouth about many things, lying in wait for him, so that they might accuse him.

Since Jesus had condemned the very concept of religion -- everything that the Perushim and lawyers stood for -- they were most anxious from this point on to try to trick Jesus into providing them with a means to legally accuse him of wrongdoing.

XXXII

12:1 *While those tens of thousands of the crowd were gathered together, so as to step on one another, he began to say to his students, "First, hold yourselves away from the yeast--that is, hypocrisy--of the Perushim. Now nothing has been hidden away which will not be revealed and hidden which will not be made known. In light of this, what you speak in the darkness will be heard in the light, and what is spoken to the ear in closets will be heralded on the rooftops.*

The expression "tens of thousands" may be used here of a crowd so large that its size could not be easily estimated. As the enormous throng was trying to sit down together to listen to Jesus, they were stepping all over one another.

Jesus began by warning them about yeast. Yeast was forbidden during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and later Jewish people created a ceremonial "search for yeast" at the time of the Passover (which takes place during the Feast). In Jesus' metaphor, then, yeast is something that is unwanted and which causes defilement. Jesus warned them about the hypocrisy of the Perushim -- those who knowingly focused on externals instead of on God's spiritual precepts.

"Nothing has been hidden away which will not be revealed." -- The fact that the Perushim and others knew (privately) what Jesus stood for but claimed otherwise publically would become obvious. In general, people should be careful not to say anything in secret that contradicts what they say in public, because secrets have a way of getting out!

"Now I am telling you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who are killing the body, and after these things they have no abundance of things to do. But I will show you someone you should

fear! Fear the one who has authority after killing to throw you into Gehenna. Yes, I am telling you, fear this one!

The Romans and Jewish leaders might be capable of "killing the body," but anyone who does what they do will be killing their own soul (or spirit). For the Perushim were not showing a proper fear for God when they denounced Jesus publically, although by now they knew who he was. They should have feared God, because God's judgement would cast their souls (or spirits) into Gehenna -- a term used symbolically of a place of destruction.

The God described in the Hebrew Bible is angry and vengeful, yet Jesus frequently paints a portrait of a loving God. That portrait is justified by some descriptions of God in the Hebrew Bible, but here Jesus indicates that the two portraits are not incongruous. God loves his people, but his anger is stirred against those who do wrong.

"Aren't five sparrows sold for two assarii? And not one of them is forgotten in God's presence. But also, the hairs of your head have all been numbered. Do not be afraid: you are valued above many sparrows!"

The crowd rightly understood that Jesus was advising them to acknowledge him as their Anointed One, despite the opposition from the Jewish leaders. But what trouble would this cause?! Opposition from the leaders should make no difference to them, says Jesus, because God watches over his people so diligently that it is as though he knows each one of their hairs personally. Sparrows are small birds, which were sold cheaply in the marketplace. Yet God watches over them carefully. More important still are God's people, who are deeply precious -- more valuable than a whole flock of sparrows.

"Now I am telling you, each one who should ever acknowledge with me in the presence of people, the Son of Man will also acknowledge with him in the presence of God's messengers. But the one who has denied me in the presence of people will be denied in the presence of God's messengers."

The people now following Jesus around are fully aware of his identity. If they would affirm his identity in the face of opposition, then Jesus would acknowledge that they are Messianic Jews where such acknowledgement really matters -- in the spiritual realm. On the other hand, if those who knew that Jesus was the Anointed One were to deny that fact in order to avoid suffering, then they would be denying him in their lives as well. In the metaphor, Jesus would deny them too in the presence of God's messengers.

"And each one who speaks a statement at the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him. But the one who speaks evil at the holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

To speak evil of (at) the holy Spirit is to witness God's power and yet attribute that power to the Enemy or the forces against God. When the Perushim accused Jesus of casting out spirit beings through the power of Ba'al Zebul, they knew that he was from God and said that anyway. Therefore, they were speaking evil not only of Jesus but of God's power as well. In the Bible, the term "holy Spirit" is used when God is communicating something to human beings, as when his

prophets demonstrated signs or wonders which proved that they were from God. Naturally, Jesus had done these things.

"Now when they bring you into the gatherings, and to the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourselves, or about what you should say. For during that hour, the holy Spirit will give you what it is necessary to say."

For whatever members of the crowd decided to acknowledge Jesus in the face of danger -- which might involve exclusion from the gatherings (synagogues) or even formal legal charges -- there would be no need to worry. Instead of concerning themselves with what they might speak in their own defense, they should realize that God would tell them whatever they needed to say. Some say that this statement merely means that if they said what they had been taught, then they would be speaking rightly. That could be the case, but it is also possible (given the miraculous signs that confirmed the message in the Actions of the Envoys) that Jesus promised them that God would literally help them to speak, just as he had told Moses what to say before the pharaoh.

Now someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to apportion the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "O human, "who set me down to be judge or arbiter over you?"
Now he said to them, "See and guard yourselves from all greed, because someone's life is not measured out of the abundance of his possessions."

In what seems to be a brief change of subject, an unidentified member of the crowd asked Jesus a question about his inheritance, wanting only a fair share for himself. However, Jesus regarded the student as focusing not on spiritual things but (erroneously) on physical things.

The Lord's response begins with a paraphrase/citation of Ex 2:14. In the Torah account, Moses had intervened during a conflict between two Hebrews. Those two Hebrews had refused his assistance, saying, "Who made you an arbiter and a judge over us?" In a reversal of role, Jesus insisted that intervening in **physical** matters was NOT part of his role as Messiah.

And so, rather than involve himself in the dispute, Jesus directed all of his students toward the matters that really were important and the internal issues that had given rise to the dispute.

Possessions are unimportant. Therefore, the crowd and each of Lukas' readers should "guard yourselves from greed."

Now he said an analogy to them, saying, "The farm of certain wealthy person produced well. And he reasoned within himself, saying, 'What will I do? Because I don't have a place where I will gather my fruits.' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my granaries, and I will construct greater ones, and I will gather all of my grain and good things there. And I will say to my life, "Life, you have many good things that are laid up for many years. Rest, eat, drink, be glad.'" But God said to him, 'You unwise person! This night they will require your life from you, but for whom will be what you have prepared?'

The analogy follows immediately from what Jesus has just said. It tells the story of someone who is very careful to manage his physical affairs well. When a need is seen for the future, he takes

action to make sure that need will be met. What could be wrong with that? Instead of focusing all of his attention on the physical world, and in particular on his possessions, the wealthy person should have been taking so much care of his spiritual well-being. Since he didn't, he was a fool, and when his life ended he was left with nothing.

It is the same way for the one who treasures things for himself and is not wealthy for God."

Which is more important in the long run? Possessions or godly qualities? Since "you can't take it with you," in the long run trust and love are more important than even the greatest of wealth. Treasuring "things" is like traveling a dead end path. It is necessary instead to be "wealthy for God".

Now he said to his students, "On account of this, I am telling you, do not be anxious about your life (what you may eat) nor for your body (what you may wear). For the life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Be mindful of the ravens, because they do not sow, neither do they reap. No storehouse or granary is theirs, and God feeds them. How much rather are you more valuable than birds?"

Taking the thought to its next logical step, Jesus answers the question, "To what extent should we concern ourselves with physical things at all?" His answer seems both extreme and shocking. Don't even worry about the "**necessities**" of life -- let alone the luxuries.

"Life is more than food" appeals to the concern about one necessity, while "the body is more than clothing" addresses another. Spiritual existence is far more important than either of these physical concerns. And anyway, God takes care of the birds -- who don't put as much effort into meeting their own needs as humans do. They aren't putting away food for the coming seasons, and yet God meets their needs. Since people who love God are more important than animals, there is no need to worry about physical concerns when the spiritual matters have been addressed.

"Now which of you by being anxious is able to add one moment to his lifespan? Therefore, if you are unable to do the least, why are you anxious about the remaining things?"

The first question is rhetorical. Certainly, we know that proper diet, avoiding stress, and staying away from hazards might improve the lifespan. But worrying will not. Since worry does not improve the quality of life in any way, it is not expedient. It makes no sense to worry about anything.

"Be mindful of the lilies. How do they grow? They neither labor nor spin. But I am telling you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these!"

The two brothers were disputing over their inheritance, but the wild lilies put no effort whatsoever into being what they are and looking the way they do. And yet, God makes them beautiful. Solomon was considered to be the epitome of wealth, and yet (Jesus said) his splendor is surpassed by a wild plant that takes no concern about its own appearance...or even its life.

"Now, since God clothes the grass of the field this way, though it exists today and is cast into a furnace tomorrow, how much rather will he give to you, oh you who scarcely trust?"

Flowers are plucked, used in bouquets and as decoration, and are cast into the furnace. Yet God takes special care to make sure that they are adorned beautifully. He cares far much more for his followers than he does for flowers! "You who scarcely trust" is a mild rebuke. Jesus recognizes that they are willing to trust God, and therefore want to learn what is important, but they have a hard time letting go of the paradigm of wealth that they see in society around them.

"And do not seek what you will eat, and what you will drink, and do not be fixed in suspense. These are all things that the nations of creation are hunting, but the Father knows that you need these things. However, you seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, because it has delighted your Father to give you the kingdom."

Meeting one's needs is a matter of priorities. The most important needs are met first, then the next important, and so on...down to the least important desires. Jesus instructed those who were willing to accept his basic teachings that if only they would continue to seek those things -- God's kingdom -- then they would have no need to seek even the things that they considered essential. God knows enough to provide for his people. Therefore, it is necessary to have God as one's top priority -- rather even than food, clothing, or shelter.

God has been delighted to give the important spiritual truths to even these who "scarcely trust." Therefore, there is no need to fear for life or breath, because the Creator is so generous and caring.

"Sell your possessions and give charitable donations. Make for yourselves pouches that do not age: an inexhaustible treasure in the heavens, where no thief comes near, neither does a moth corrupt. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Once again, this is all about priorities. It is about "what you value." Are possessions important? Sell them, because in spiritual thought they are worthless. They are only "things" that age, decay, and are stolen.

"Wherever your treasure is"... Your treasure is what you value. ..."there will your heart be also." When you lose what is unimportant to you, you suffer no loss. If thieves take what is worthless, or if moths cause decay to something unimportant, it will not trouble you. If you place little or no importance on material goods, then whether or not you have them will be of no significance. And of course, there is an underlying concern here: which is more important, an inheritance or a relationship between siblings? As he has said earlier, "life is not measured out of the abundance of one's possessions."

Your highest priority, especially in the time between the arrival of Jesus and the destruction of the temple, ought to be on God's teachings. It is more important to follow God's precepts than to concern one's self with any other matters.

"Stand "with your belt buckled around your waist" and your lamps burning. And you be like people who are expecting their Lord, when he is released from the wedding feasts, so that when he comes and knocks, it would be opened to him immediately. Blessed are those slaves whom the Lord will find being vigilant when he comes! Indeed, I am telling you that he will buckle his belt, and he will have them recline, and he will come forward and serve them. And if he comes and finds it this way during the second or the third guard, blessed are they!"

Someone might have suggested that with the wealth of the Jewish nation it made sense to follow society's path and focus on material goods for the time being -- only to later turn to God. Jesus has already mentioned the possibility of sudden death; at this point he turns to the impending First Revolt and judgment on Israel.

The judgment was soon to come. Therefore, Jesus' students needed to focus on God then and not later. The quote comes from Ex 12:11, which identifies the manner in which the Israelites were to wait for another judgment -- the Exodus from Egypt. Just as it was necessary then to be completely ready for the coming of the destroying angel, so also in the first century it was important to wait for the judgment with the same heightened level of expectation.

What reward would come to those who waited faithfully, instead of pursuing monetary wealth? In the metaphor, they would be served by Jesus himself when Jesus returned. In other words, the teachings of Jesus would reveal themselves for what they are: the most wonderful principles of life.

The second guard and third guard lasted through the middle of the night. It would not be expected for a wealthy man to return home in the middle of the night. In the metaphor, how much more blessed it would be for those who were still patiently waiting when their master returned in the middle of the night. In application, it would seem even more special and wonderful to those who were expecting the judgment when it came -- and who had lived rightly.

"Now you know this: that if the ruler of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would not have allowed him to dig through into his house. You become prepared also, because at an hour you are not thinking of, the Son of Man is coming."

Naturally, if everyone there knew exactly when the judgment was going to come, they could delay. Perhaps they could together even prevent the Revolt from happening. But since it was about to happen without their direct involvement, they needed to be prepared. Jesus would return in judgment soon and unannounced.

41 *Now Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this analogy to us or to everyone also?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the trustworthy, the mindful steward, whom the Lord will set down over his curings, to give seasonally the proper measure of wheat? Blessed is that slave, whom his lord finds doing things this way when he comes. I tell you truly that he will set him down over all his possessions."*

Would the Messiah's own faithful not realize when he was going to return? The answer is that they *would* know, but who indeed are his faithful? Or, in Jesus' analogy, "Who is the trustworthy steward?"

The word translated "curings" in the NET is *θεραπεία*, from which we obtain the word "therapeutic." The term is a broad one, and in the NT it often indicates doing something that helps someone grow (or heal) spiritually. That is the significance here. What servants should this lord trust? He will entrust the diligent, mindful servant -- the one who is watching his affairs carefully. Naturally, such a servant would be observant enough to realize when the Lord was about to return.

"But if that slave should say in his heart, 'My lord is prolonging the time until his coming,' and if he begins to strike the servant boys and the servant girls, and to eat up food and drink and get drunk, the lord of that slave will come during a day when he isn't expecting it and in an hour that he doesn't know, and he will divide himself from him and he will place his portion with the distrustful.

There is always a second side, and here the details of that flip side are actually presented in more detail. The person who entered the new covenant in order to live for God but who decided instead to live for himself, considering that maybe Jesus would return not in his own generation (70 CE) but in some far off period in the future -- that servant is doomed, because the second coming was to happen very soon.

"But that slave, who knew what his lord wanted and was not prepared, nor did what he wanted, he will be beaten many times. But the one who did not know, but who did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten little. Now much will be sought from the one to whom much is given, and they will ask for more from the one with whom they deposited much.

Even among the distrustful, the unfaithful, there are categories of shame. Someone who knowingly rejected Jesus' teachings would be treated much more harshly than someone who didn't really understand the teachings and who did wrong. Knowledge brings with it responsibility, and the greater one's knowledge, the greater one's responsibility. This was addressed to Jewish people, although the principle (Romans 1-2) was soon to be extended also to gentiles. There were some members of the Jewish leadership who knew exactly who Jesus was, and yet they refused to acknowledge him. There were others who simply realized that Jesus' internalization of the Torah was difficult and refused to practice his teachings. These groups of people were in serious trouble; in fact, they were in much more trouble than the people who simply went through all the public show of religion without really understanding Jesus' teachings. True, such people weren't really living lives of love and trust, but their actions came out of ignorance.

"I came to throw fire on the land, and what would I want, if it were already kindled? But I have to be baptized with a baptism, and oh how I am being held until whenever it is completed! Do you think that I have happened by to give peace to the land? No, I tell you! On the contrary, I will give division.

Jesus has already established his identity among the majority of his listeners, and he has just pointed ahead to judgment. Here, he continues by addressing the popular expectations of the Messiah. Wouldn't the Anointed One be a benevolent king who would bring prosperity to Israel? Not in the ways they were expecting.

"I came to throw fire" indicates that one purpose of the coming of the Anointed One was to bring judgment. "What would I want if it were already kindled?" In other words, "What would my purpose be" if the fire, the judgment, had already begun? This rhetorical question is intended to point out the necessity of the coming judgment. Judgment was coming; Jesus came to judge; and therefore, the judgment was being heralded. As an illustration of judgment, even Jesus himself was about to undergo a "baptism" -- a cleansing ritual. Jesus would have to willingly subject himself to death at others' hands, and so if even the Anointed One were being judged, so also everyone must be judged.

Peace was going to come to Jesus' followers, but it would not be earthly peace. Instead of material prosperity, Jesus was going to bring division. Close friends and relatives would hate one another because of him.

"For from now on, five will be in one house, divided--three on two and two on three. Father divided against son and 'son against father.' Mother against daughter and 'daughter against mother.' Mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and 'daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'"

Jesus' listeners would recognize Jesus' expansion on a quote from the Hebrew Bible. The prophet Micah also spoke of a coming judgment. Micah had predicted the original fall of Jerusalem (587/6 BCE), and now Jesus was similarly predicting a destruction of the city that was yet to come. In referring to the coming judgment, Jesus had stated the necessity to be diligent. Now he hearkens back to Micah's warnings about the evil people of his day and certain signs that judgment was coming. One of those signs was that neighbors and relatives would be caused to fight one another (Mic 7:5-6). Similarly, the Jewish people would divide over Jesus' teachings. Should the Torah be internalized or not?

Historically, the mainstream Jewish people and Jesus' followers (later called Christians) were almost completely separate by the time the First Revolt began. In 65 CE, certain Jewish leaders held a council in Jerusalem that explicitly identified the Christian writings as unsuitable for public reading. Some of those writings (in our New Testament) record the struggle between Paulus, Peter, Jacob, and their fellow Jews. This is precisely what Jesus had predicted.

54 *Now he also said to the crowds, "When you notice the cloud rising up in the west, you quickly say that, 'A shower is coming,' and so it happens. And when the south wind blows, you say that, 'It will be hot,' and it happens. Hypocrites! You know how to examine the face of the land and the sky, but how don't you know to examine this season?!"*

Here, Jesus was being fairly explicit, trying to explain that the conflict between his followers and the (other) Jewish people was going to escalate. That conflict, and the separation between the groups that ensued, should be a clear sign that the judgment is near. But surely there would be

those who were capable of predicting the weather according to its signs and yet who would be incapable of interpreting more notable signs of change.

"Now why don't you judge what is just, even from yourselves? For as you go up with your opponent to a ruler, give work on the way to be released from him, lest he should drag you to the judge, and the judge deliver you up to the official, and the official throw you into jail. I am telling you, you will by no means get out of there until you have paid even the last lepton!"

Does it make more sense to follow the principles now, or should someone wait until later? Maybe the people should wait until shortly before the judgment. Jesus asks analogously if it makes more sense to resolve legal problems out of court or to wait until you get there. After all, he reasons, out of court you might resolve matters reasonably between you, but in court you might be ordered by the judge into jail. If you owe money, you might not be released until you have paid the last lepton that you owe. A lepton, by the way, was a small copper coin that was scarcely worth anything.

Jesus' implication is that it always makes more sense to avoid judgment by doing right. Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus' followers to live their whole lives by God's principles.

XXXIII

13:1 *Now certain people were present during this season, relating to him about the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilatus mixed with their sacrifices. And he answered, saying to them, "Do you think that those Galilaeans became sinners beyond all those in Galilaiah because they suffered these things? No, I tell you. But if you don't change your minds, all of you will be destroyed similarly. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam, and it killed them, do you think that they happened to be debtors beyond all those people who dwelt in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But if you do not change your minds, in the same way, all of you will be destroyed."*

An unknown amount of time has passed, but given the wording, the passing was a matter of days or weeks. It was widely believed that suffering of sorts was always indicative of misfavor with God. If someone had suffered for something, then he must have been doing something wrong. All suffering was regarded as punishment. It is in this context that "certain people" were mentioning something that had happened recently.

Many people suppose that "Galilaeans" here is intended as a Greek form of "Gaulonites." Josephus refers to the Gaulonites as follows:

Yet was there one Judah, a Gaulonite from a city named Gamala, who, taking with him Zadok, a Perush, became jealous to draw them to revolt. They both said that paying tribute was no better than an introduction to slavery, and they incited the nation to assert their liberty -- as though they could obtain for them happiness and security for what they possessed and an assured enjoyment of an even greater good: the honor and glory they would thereby acquire for generosity.

...All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this teaching to a great degree. One violent battle after another happened to us, and we lost our

friends who used to comfort our pains. There were also very great robberies and the murder of our principal men. Indeed, this was done allegedly for the public welfare, but in reality for the hopes of personal gain. From this, rebellions arose, and from them murders of men, which sometimes fell on those of their own people...." (Antiquities, XVIII, 1, 1-2)

According to Josephus, Judah and Zadok were essentially responsible for a rebellious Zealot faction within Judaism. If indeed it is these "Gaulonites" who were intended, Pontius Pilatus ordered them slaughtered. Some regarded them as heroes, and so the question to Jesus was a difficult one -- for his questioners were asking him whether or not those men had done wrong.

Whether or not those particular men were intended, or perhaps some unreported Galilaiaans, the thrust is the same. The people were probably arrested for participating in a rebellion, and so Jesus was being asked whether or not their actions were wrong. After all, they had suffered and therefore weren't they being punished?

Jesus' answer appealed both to Zealots and non-Zealots, for he rejected the idea that suffering and punishment were always connected. In the Galilaiaans' case, they were no more wrong than anyone else. In the second case, brought up by Jesus, some men who were misfortunate enough to have a tower fall on them were simply unlucky. Misfortune happens to everyone sometimes. Did the Galilaiaans sin more than others? No. Did the Jerusalemmites owe more to God than anyone else? No.

At this point in each account, Jesus turns to his listeners. A very real judgment on all Israel was about to come, and unless his listeners acknowledged who he was and embraced his teachings, they would be destroyed. And in this case, it **WOULD** be a punishment.

Now he told this analogy: "A certain person had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit from it, and he didn't find any. Now he said to the gardener, 'Look, I have come for three years seeking fruit from this fig tree, and I find none. Therefore, chop it down. Why should it make the land useless?' But he answered, saying to him, 'Lord, leave it this year also, until I dig and cast a dung heap around it--to see if indeed it might make fruit for the time to come. But if not, you may chop it down.'"

This is the warning to Israel about the coming forty years. God had been patiently waiting for the Israelites to recognize the spiritual principles behind the Torah and to practice those principles. Now, with the Messiah having come, those principles were being explained, but still many of the people were rejecting them. The nation was fruitless.

Was the judgment to come immediately? No. Instead, God was giving them time -- with the message spreading -- to accept Jesus' teachings. After that short season, then the tree would be chopped down (i.e., Priestly Judaism would be wiped out).

XXXIV

10 *Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues during the Sabbath days. And look, there was a woman who had a spirit of weakness for eighteen years, and she was bent over and was unable*

to straighten up at any time. Now when Jesus noticed her, he called out to her and said to her, "Woman, you are released from your weakness." And he placed his hands on her, and immediately she became upright, and she glorified God.

Once again, Jesus shows mercy toward a woman. This time, the occasion is a sabbath day, during which Jesus was teaching in an organized Jewish gathering, or "synagogue."

But the ruler of the synagogue, being indignant, answered this by saying to the crowd, "There are six days during which it is necessary to work. Therefore, come and be cured during these, and not on the Sabbath day." But the Lord answered him, saying, "Hypocrites! Which one of you would not let his ox or his donkey go from the stall, and lead it to drink? But wasn't it necessary to loose this woman from this bond on the Sabbath, who is a daughter of Abraham, who was bound by the Enemy, look, for eighteen years?"

The synagogue had a positional leadership structure, and here it was the ruler (or leader) of the synagogue who was outraged at what had taken place. Notice, though, that his outrage was not necessarily directed toward Jesus but toward the woman herself for coming to be healed. The leader alludes to Exodus 20, one of the Ten Words, when he begins, "There are six days during which it is necessary to work."

Jesus defends the woman. Since it is considered a good thing to meet the needs of one's animals on the Sabbath, it is even better -- a necessary thing -- to be healed from such a debilitating illness on the Sabbath. In making his defense, Jesus refers to the woman as "a daughter of Abraham." While it was common to refer to men as "sons of Abraham," the use of "daughter of Abraham" was at least extremely rare. Jesus' statement is deliberate, for in saying so he supports her as the equal to any man there, even the leader of the synagogue.

And at his saying this, all of his opponents were disgraced, and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were being done by him.

Once again, Jesus' actions separated the ordinary people and himself from the leadership who opposed him. Realizing that Jesus must be correct, his opposition was disgraced; knowing that again he was right, his supporters cheered.

18 *Therefore he said, "What is God's kingdom like? And to what will I liken it? It is like a mustard grain, which a person took and cast into his garden. And it grew, and it became a tree, and "the birds of the sky nested in its branches.""*

And again he said, "To what will I liken God's kingdom? It is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed into three sata of meal until the whole was leavened."

Jesus illustrates the power of living life by God's spiritual principles in two ways. The first analogy is intended for the men in his audience, and there is a parallel analogy for the women. In each case, the kingdom is something that for all purposes is invisible, but the result of Jesus' teachings in practice is great. When the man puts the teachings into practice, he sees its effect (symbolized by a large tree); similarly, the woman who puts his teachings into practice will see a

great effect (loaves of bread). It is a powerful thing to practice love for one another, and Jesus had just shown compassion as an example to everyone there.

XXXV

22 *And he went through cities and villages, teaching. And he went on, making for Jerusalem. Now someone said to him, "Lord, is it a little number who are being saved?" Now Jesus said to him, "Struggle to enter through the small door, because I am telling you: many will seek to enter, and they will not be strong enough."*

By now, it is probably early Spring. Jesus still wanders the countryside teaching, but now he is closer to Jerusalem, and Lukas reminds us of his destination.

What is the nature of the question? After hearing Jesus' talk of the coming judgment, people have begun to realize that Jesus was telling them that most of Israel would go down in that judgment. Perhaps some of them considered that everyone who fought for Israel during the First Revolt would be destroyed. The question as to whether only a few would survive makes perfect sense in this context. It is likely that they still understand destruction and salvation in regard to biological life, but at this time even the Twelve have difficulty grasping the "location" of God's kingdom.

"Enter through the small door." A large (or wide) door indicates an easy entry, but someone would have to squeeze through a small (or narrow) door. Effort is required. If Jesus' listeners went along with where the rest of mainstream Judaism was going, they would be passing through a wide door. In order to make it through the small door, they would have to reject where their nation was going. This would be a difficult task even today. "Many will seek to enter" predicts the attitudes of people at the time of the First Revolt as well as in general. It might seem like a nice idea to follow Jesus' teachings, but few would actually put them into practice. It would take true strength of character to be able to resist social norms and live spiritually.

"From the time when the ruler of the house rises up and shuts the door, then if you should begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open it for us,' he will also answer, telling you, 'I don't know you. Where are you from?' Then you will begin to say, 'We have eaten and have drunk in your presence, and you taught in our open places.'"

Jesus' analogy about the small door was connected directly to his talk regarding the coming judgment. In the judgment, the "door would be shut," metaphorically, to anyone who wanted to cling to ritual religion. They would beg to come in -- to have access to God, but no access would be granted. They would plead that they had seen and even met Jesus. Why, they were even there when he taught. But of course, they had not listened to his teachings and did not practice them.

"And he will say, 'I am telling you, I don't know you. Where are you from?' "All you people get away from me who are workers of injustice!" There will be crying and the grinding of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaak and Jacob and all the prophets in God's kingdom, and when you see yourself outside being cast out. And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and they will recline in God's kingdom. And look, they are last who will be first, and they are first who will be last."

Jesus' reaction to those who would want to enter his "kingdom" when Priestly Judaism was falling is directed in particular toward the Jewish leaders. The quote stems from Psa 6:8, wherein the author turns to Yahweh God and rejects his enemies around him, knowing that God would put them to shame. Jesus combines this image with that of the patriarchs and prophets in the afterlife. "God's kingdom," though, is not equal to the afterlife. The kingdom represents whatever is right with God, and the prophets are in the afterlife now because they have always followed God's teachings.

Now indeed, Jesus adds that there will eventually be a good number of people who are able to relax (or rest), knowing that they belong to God's kingdom. But such people are regarded by the Jewish leaders as the lowest of the social order, for many were labeled "drunkards," or "prostitutes," or simply "sinners." Yet those Jewish leaders who currently held prominence -- they were "first" -- would be regarded as "last" later on. Social pre-eminence on earth has nothing to do even with participation in God's kingdom. Those who do right belong to the kingdom, regardless of affiliation or status.

XXXVI

31 *During that hour, certain Perushim came to him, saying to him, "Come out, go away from here, because Herod wants to kill you!" And he said to them, "Go and say to that fox, look, I am casting out spirit beings, and I am completing healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will have completed. However, it is necessary for me to go on today and tomorrow and on the coming day, because it is not received that a prophet may be destroyed outside of Jerusalem.*

It is notable that it is not one of Jesus' admirers but one of the Perushim who warns Jesus about Herod's desire to kill him. While it is probably true that Herod Antipas had heard enough about Jesus to want to hunt him down, the Perushim most likely mentioned it because they wanted to frighten Jesus away.

The use of the term "fox" in reference to Herod Antipas (or perhaps, actually, to the person speaking with him) may have signified the fact that foxes were regarded as bad omens. Most commentators regard it as an indicator of a treacherous character. Either way, the term seems to have been applied both to Herod and to the Perushim who were there to "warn" him, for Jesus' focus is not on Herod but on the Jewish people of the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus also refers to "today, tomorrow, and the third day"; that is, the expression "the third day" was being used to indicate "the day after tomorrow." It was common then to count the original day when beginning an enumeration of days. Although this was not always the case, it is so in Luke's writings. While this may have been a secretive reference to Jesus' coming death and resurrection, it is probably only an indicator that Jesus was about to finish his work soon and would then enter Jerusalem to be executed.

"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who were sent out to her! How often I wanted to gather up your children in the manner of a bird gathering her chicks under her wings! And you didn't want it. Look, your household is being hurled away to you, and

I am telling you: You will not see me until the time comes when you say, "The one who comes in Yahweh's name is praiseworthy.""

If 2nd Esdras was written prior to the time of Jesus, then Jesus quotes a section of it here:

Yahweh Almighty says this: "Haven't I begged you like a father begs his sons, or a mother her daughters, or a nurse her children -- that you would be my people and I would be your god, and that you would be my sons and I would be your Father? I gathered you like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But now, what will I do to you? I will cast you from my presence." (2 Esd 1:28-30)

But the time of completion of that section of 2 Esdras is by no means certain. Some regard the bulk of the writing (chapters 3-14) as having been made during the third quarter of the 2nd century BCE, shortly after the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV (2 Esd 3:1). If this is so, then the rest of the book was probably complete in Greek by the time of Jesus. On the other hand, if chapters 3-14 were written near the end of the 1st century CE, then the section quoted above was probably written by a second century Christian author who deliberately quoted Jesus.

At any rate, Jesus describes himself in a feminine role -- that of a protective mother hen. But many of the Jewish people have rejected his protection, preferring instead the comfort of religion. And so, when Jesus has completed his work, he will leave, and they will not be able to "see" him (with their hearts and minds) until they are able to accept who he was. Metaphorically, they would have to praise him as having come as a representative of God. The quotation is not unique; forms like it appear in several places in the Hebrew Bible. But perhaps Jesus cites it from the Hallel (Psalm 118:26), near which we also read that the Messiah could be regarded as "the stone that the builders rejected" -- the one which "has become the cornerstone." Like the psalm, many of Jesus' listeners (and the Jewish leaders in particular) would call out to Yahweh for salvation, but only those who were willing to recognize that Jesus had been the Messiah would be saved.

XXXVII

14:1 *And as he was coming into a house of one of the rulers of the Perushim on a Sabbath to eat bread, it happened that they were scrutinizing him. And look, a certain person who had dropsy was in his presence. And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Perushim, saying, "Is it legal to cure on the Sabbath or not?" But they were quiet. And Jesus took hold of him and cured him, and he let him go. And he said to them, "Which of you, if your son or ox should fall into a pit, would not immediately lift him out during the Sabbath?" And they were not strong enough to reply back to these things.*

By this time, Jesus' opponents scarcely dared to confront him on the issue of the Sabbath. Knowing this, Jesus chose to confront their own ignorance. While in the presence of the most knowledgeable and noteworthy religious leaders, Jesus noticed someone who could benefit from healing. Instead of healing the man and then being questioned, Jesus sought "permission" from the leaders. That is, he wanted them to admit ahead of time that he would be doing nothing wrong and everything right by healing the man.

Although from their doctrinal standpoint the matter was clear -- it was illegal to cure on the Sabbath -- they found themselves unable to tell him not to cure the man. In this case, their silence was assent. Jesus healed him, and still the leaders were quiet. The lesson this time was short, pointing out that the leaders themselves would help someone or something in need on the Sabbath, just as Jesus had done. Still they refused to speak, and Lukas points out that they were not knowledgeable enough (strong, spiritually) to say anything one way or the other. The implication is that this time they realized that there was a hole in their understanding. Therefore, Jesus does not address them further about the Sabbath.

7 Now paying attention to the way they were choosing the first places, he told an analogy to those who had been called, saying to them, "When you are called by someone to a wedding feast, do not recline at the first place, lest someone more honorable than you should have been invited by him, and then the one who called you and him will say to you, 'Give this person a place.' And then you will begin with shame to hold the last place."

In the gatherings, it was customary socially to provide the front positions to people who were favored in the community. Such was a matter of status as well as position. Reversing their notion of status, Jesus informs them that they ought to be seeking the back row seats -- the seats of least prestige. After all, he reasons, if you are in the front row, the person in charge of the feast (in this analogy) might make you move back in order to make way for someone more socially prestigious. That is to say, you would be disgraced by having tried to take the front seat.

"On the contrary, when you are called, go recline at the last place, so that when the one who called you comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, make your way up to a higher place.' Then it will be a glory to you in the presence of all those who are reclining together with you, because each one who elevates himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be elevated."

On the other hand, if you sit in back -- in the least prestigious position -- then the person in charge of the feast will more likely tell you to move forward, in the presence of the whole group. Therefore, it would only be an honor for you to sit in a place that is beneath your social station.

Jesus uses this analogy to demonstrate how "each one who elevates himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be elevated." For it is contrary to a loving lifestyle to seek position for yourself. Whoever does so has no status in the kingdom, nor in God's eyes. But the person who loves will seek only to help others, putting others' needs first. This is something that God values greatly, as do all of those who follow his principles.

12 Now also, he said to the one who had called him, "When you make a meal or a dinner, don't sound out for your friends, nor your brothers, nor your relatives, nor your wealthy neighbors, lest they also call you in return, and repayment would be done to you. On the contrary, when you make a feast, call poor people, maimed people, lame people, blind people. And you will be blessed, because they don't have authority to repay you. For you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just."

Here we find another social reversal of fortune. What if you are the one throwing a party? Do you call the wealthy people around you? Well, that's what everyone does. But it is no gift to give

to people who will repay you. If instead you give to people who are unable to repay you, then you are truly giving.

Does this mean that no one should give to their friends? No. Jesus was addressing the attitude of giving. How should we give? Don't give knowing, believing, or even suspecting that others will repay you. Give expecting nothing whatsoever in return. Such giving is true and from the heart, and God himself will reward you for it. When? Not necessarily in this life but in the afterlife ("the resurrection of the just").

Now a certain one of those who were reclined together heard these things and said to him, "Blessed is the one who will eat bread in God's kingdom!" But Jesus said to him, "A certain person made a great dinner, and he called many. And he sent out his slave at the hour of the dinner to say to those whom he had called, 'Come, because it is now ready.' And they began with one accord to all excuse themselves.

While eating this particular meal, Jesus has made two analogies thusfar that relate to meals or feasts. In response to a comment by an unknown guest, he provides the third and most detailed "meal" analogy.

"Blessed is the one who will eat bread in God's kingdom" may have been intended literally, but Jesus interprets it spiritually, as also later he will mention eating again with his students in the kingdom. What does it mean to share a meal with Jesus in God's kingdom?

Those who eat in God's kingdom are those who have followed Jesus' teachings. Eating a meal with him becomes a metaphor for fellowship in the afterlife, an afterlife that has just been mentioned.

"The first said to him, 'I bought a field, and I have a necessity to go out to see it. I am asking you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I bought five yokes of oxen, and I am going to examine them. I am asking you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I married a woman, and on account of this it is impossible for me to come.'

These were all reasonable excuses for breaking a commitment to attend a festival dinner. When purchasing land, it was important to verify that the parcel was exactly as it had been represented as being. Therefore, wasn't it necessary to go out to examine the land? Similarly, oxen were important in farming and in hauling goods. If you just bought some oxen, sight unseen, it only made sense to make sure you were getting your money's worth -- for if it were otherwise, you might be ruined, financially. Being recently married disqualified a man from all kinds of obligations -- including military service. It was assumed that the couple would spend time together. Yes, every one of these excuses was reasonable.

"And when the slave came by, he related these things to his lord. Then the ruler of the house got angry and said to his slave, "Exit quickly into the open squares and streets of the city, and lead poor people, and maimed people, and blind people, and lame people in here.' And the slave said, 'Lord, what you directed has been done, and yet there is room.' And the lord said to the slave,

'Exit into the roads and hedges, and necessitate people to enter, so that my house would be filled up. For I am telling you that none of those men who had been invited will taste my dinner!'

The invitees who were making excuses were the Jewish leaders and literati. They had been examining the writings in search of the Anointed One, but when he came, they made up every kind of (somewhat reasonable) excuse as to why they could not embrace his teachings. Jesus said that rather than concerning himself with such people, God had sent Jesus to invite people who were not well regarded socially. In metaphor, the poor, the blind, and so on were socially unacceptable, and Jesus had taken his message to people who fit these descriptions -- physically - - but also to others who were not acceptable for other reasons.

Then Jesus indicates that it would be preferable to force people to come to the dinner rather than allow the original invitees to participate. This is an exaggeration, designed to demonstrate that it would be impossible for those people who clung to their ritual religion to participate in "the meal" in God's kingdom. That is, the religious leaders were not going to accept Jesus' teachings, and so there was no way that they would ever have fellowship (relationship, partnership) with him in the afterlife, having not partnered with his teachings in this life.

XXXVIII

25 Now many people, crowds, were going with him, and he turned and said to them, "If someone comes to me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters -- both these and even his life -- he is unable to be my student. The one who doesn't bear his cross and come after me is unable to be my student."

This follows from the previous section. Jesus had been hinting around the issue of priorities -- that it was necessary to make his interpretation of the Torah a top priority in this life. Otherwise, it would not matter how religious or socially powerful a person was: nothing would save him.

"Hate" is used as an extreme of comparisons, as in "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." In English terms, someone's love for his family must be so weak by comparison to his love for Jesus' teachings that (by comparison) his love for his family is like hatred. Otherwise, it would be impossible to be Jesus' student.

Jesus' teachings are so crucial that it is necessary to value them even above your own life; otherwise, it is impossible to be Jesus' student. Life is filled with priorities, and when two priorities conflict, whichever wins the argument is the higher priority. Keeping the principles of trust and love is so important that it is necessary to choose to be loving -- even if it means losing your own life. For it is not life in this world that is most valuable.

Being able to "bear (or carry) one's cross" means following Jesus' teachings even if it means choosing to suffer. What seems to be pleasurable, or beneficial, or the easy path is not always the most important path to take. Sometimes it is hard to make the right choice.

"For which of you who wants to construct a tower does not first sit down to calculate the cost, to see if he has enough for the final crafting? (So that) otherwise, after laying his foundation and

not being strong enough to complete it, all those who were watching would begin to mock him, saying that, 'This person began to construct and was not strong enough to complete it.'

What is important, then? It is easy to follow someone like a groupie does. Hey, all my friends are following that Jesus guy, so why don't I? But following Jesus is not something that anyone can do blindly. People have to carefully consider whether or not they honestly believe that living according to spiritual principles and not ritual religion is the correct way of life. Is it what God wants?

Making that determination is like determining the cost of constructing a tower. If you know how much it will cost -- even to the point of putting the principles ahead of your life -- then you'll be able to live by those principles for the rest of your days. Otherwise, you'll only leave Jesus when it becomes difficult -- whenever a higher priority comes into conflict with the precepts of trust and love. One must decide to put God first in order to live rightly.

"Or what king goes to another king, to take him into battle, and does not first sit down and make a plan, to see if he is able with ten thousand people to meet the one that is coming against him with twenty thousand? But if indeed he is unable, while he is far away, doesn't he send out an ambassador and ask for peace?"

It would make more sense to give up now and to beg God for mercy, rather than to rush into making a covenant through Jesus that you would later not want to honor. Metaphorically, sit down and think about it. Can you really put God's principle first?

"Therefore similarly, each of you who does not put away all his possessions is unable to be my student. Therefore, salt is nice, but if the salt is also made stupid, in what will it be salted? It is useful for neither land nor a dung heap. They throw it out. The one who has ears to hear should hear."

Was Jesus advocating complete asceticism? Should people abandon everything they own? Some people think he is saying this. But again, this is an extreme of comparison. Your possessions must be relatively worthless to you, or you will never be able to follow Jesus to the end. Otherwise, what will happen when those possessions are threatened? You will make a priority decision and leave Jesus. Instead, it makes more sense to think about these things ahead of time and make the decision intelligently to live by God's principles.

Your "salt" is your example (see also Mt 5:13). If you start out lovingly but then abandon the principle, your example will become worthless. Therefore, it makes sense -- again -- to consider what sort of example you will set when thinking about whether to leave ritual religion behind and follow Jesus' teachings.

XXXIX

15:1 *Now all the tribute takers and the sinners were drawing near to him to hear him. And both the Perushim and the scribes were grumbling, saying, "He is receiving sinners and is eating with them." But he told this analogy to them, saying:*

Earlier, there were three analogies that dealt with dinners or feasts. Here, Jesus tells three analogies that deal with losing and finding things. The first is told from the perspective of a man, the second from a woman's perspective, and the third -- once again the most detailed -- is for everyone and addresses the conflict with the religious leaders most directly.

Some time has passed since the previous account, but again the time was not great. On this occasion, "sinners" -- people who have left the teachings of the Torah (at least in the eyes of the leadership) -- were flocking to see Jesus. These were the sorts of people mentioned earlier as being socially unacceptable. Naturally, then, the Perushim (who were concerned with social matters) complained about Jesus' behavior.

"What person from among you who has one hundred sheep and who loses one of them does not abandon the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And after finding it, he places it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And after coming into the house, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!' I am telling you that in this way there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who changes his mind, more than over ninety-nine just people who have no need of mental change.

Nicknamed the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in Lukas' account this begins three stories about "lost" things/people. The first of the three was directed to the men, the second was directed to the women, and (as earlier) the final version provides the most details.

One of the functions expected of the Anointed One was to seek out and retrieve "lost sheep" -- people who had wandered away from God's principles. Through the Messiah, God promised to "seek the lost, and ... bring back the strayed" (Ezek 34:16, see also vv. 23-4). In regarding the social outcasts as lost sheep, Jesus fulfils the role of shepherd.

The social outcasts were the focus of Jesus' work because God was already pleased with those who had embraced the Messianic message and who were not outcasts. They did not need the special attention that these "lost sheep" required.

8 *"Or what woman who has ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds it? And after finding it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma that was lost.' In this way, I am telling you, rejoicing happens in the presence of God's messengers over one sinner who changes his mind."*

Once again, while God is already pleased with those who happily received his message, he is also ecstatic about the ones who had wandered away from the Torah and yet who came back to hear the message of Jesus. In this analogy, it is like the happiness over finding lost money. This is usually nicknamed the Parable of the Lost Coin.

11 *Now he said, "A certain person had two sons. And the younger of them said to the father, 'Father, give me the part of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them.*

Some refer to this as the Parable of the Two Sons or the Parable of the Prodigal (Wasteful) Son. In the context, the Parable of the Lost Son might be a more appropriate title, but the focus is just as great on the "second" son here.

As the analogy begins, one son leaves the father's house and goes away. This son represents those "lost sheep" who had left God's teachings. Some of them may have left Judaism because the additional burden provided by the rabbinic instruction was more than they felt they could bear. The second son represents not the Perushim but all of those who had stayed behind and who had chosen to listen to the Messianic teachings.

"And after not many days, gathering everything, the younger son traveled abroad into a distant country, and there he scattered his property about, living imprudently. Now after he spent it all, a strong famine happened in that country, and he began to lack food.

Jesus' implication is that the "lost" who had left God's teachings were actually searching for the truth. They had learned rather quickly that God provided them with nourishment but with the ritual religion of Priestly Judaism being the only option, they believed they had nowhere to go.

"And he went and joined up with one of the citizens of that country, and that one sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he strongly desired to be well fed by the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him any.

Since pigs were unclean animals, herding swine was viewed as socially unacceptable, just as these "lost" people were regarded as uncouth and "sinners." From Jesus' point of view, those people were not disgusting ne'er-do-wells; instead, they were ordinary people seeking for truth whose dignity was removed by their low status.

"But he came to himself and said, 'So many of my father's hirelings have an abundance of bread! But here I am, hungry and lost. I will get up and go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned before heaven and in your presence. I am not even worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hirelings.''" And he rose up and went to his father.

Coming to one's self was their metaphor for our expression "coming to one's senses." The lost son realized that he needed his father. Even so, those people called "sinners" who thronged around Jesus recognized that they needed God and that the Messiah provided genuine access to a relationship with God. In seeking Jesus' teachings, they were returning to their Father.

"Now while he was still at a distance, his father noticed him, and he felt compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him passionately. But the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned before heaven and in your presence. I am not even worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the foremost robe and clothe him. And give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet. And bring the fatted calf, and sacrifice it, and let us eat and be glad, because my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and has been found.' And they began to be glad.

In the story, the wasteful son realizes that he needs his father and returns to him. The father is so happy to see his son again that he throws a large feast. This parallels the statement in the coin analogy that God is overjoyed when those who have wandered away choose to return to him. If the analogy ended here, it would parallel the other two and say little more. But it continues:

"But his son, the older one, was in a field. And as he was coming near to the house, he heard a group of musical instruments and a group of singers, and he called one of the servant boys to him and inquired whatever these things might be. Now he said to him that, 'Your brother has come, and your father has sacrificed the fatted calf, because he has received him back healthy.'

Some of those who had remained faithful to the Torah all their lives were questioning Jesus' motives in pursuing the lost. The account attributes the question to the Perushim, but the father's response to the older son's behavior indicates that the Perushim are not the intended target here. What the Perushim were hoping to do by questioning Jesus at this time was to create a rift among Jesus' followers. Some were new converts from among the group of "lost sheep," while others had followed the Torah all along and had happily accepted Jesus as Messiah when he came.

In the analogy, the older brother wonders why there is such rejoicing and becomes jealous that his brother's return is being treated with such circumstance.

"Now he was angry and did not want to enter. But his father exited and called him aside. Now he answered, saying to his father, 'Look: for so many years I have slaved for you, and I have never bypassed your precept. And you never gave me a goat, so that I would be glad with my friends. But when this son of yours came, the one who devoured your living with prostitutes, for HIM you sacrificed the fatted calf!'"

A goat would have been an animal to be slaughtered for a minor meal, perhaps a poor man's meal. The older son complains that he never once received a goat for a party, and yet the fatted calf was slaughtered for the younger son's return. To the faithful son this makes no sense. Why make such a big deal that an unfaithful son has returned home? Why not throw feasts on behalf of the faithfulness of the older son?

Jesus has portrayed the jealousy of the older son (of his faithful followers) as unwarranted. For those who might be receptive to the questions of the Perushim, Jesus does not allow them the prerogative to become jealous.

"Now he said to him, 'Child, you are always with me. And all things that are mine, are yours. But it is necessary to be glad and to rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is now alive. And he was lost, and has been found!'"

A faithful child of God will inherit the whole kingdom, and these who have been trustworthy have always been among God's greatness. This has not been the case with those who had known the greatness and had left it. They spent much of their time starving for truth -- starving for God's love.

Those who have always trusted God have no reason to be jealous because they have always had the security of knowing that they have had everything. They too should be as pleased as God is to know that their brothers and sisters have returned to join them in their happiness. For God's kingdom is not about what one can obtain for one's self but about love for others.

XL

16:1 *Now he said to his students, "A certain person who was wealthy had a steward who was accused before him of wasting his possessions. And he called for him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give me an account of your stewardship. For you are unable to still be a steward.' But the steward said within himself, 'What will I do? Because my lord is removing the stewardship from me. I don't have the strength to dig. I am ashamed to beg.*

This instruction to Jesus' students would also serve to rebuke the Perushim who were stirring up trouble. In fact, the discussion that begins here identifies clearly from Jesus' perspective just what it means to be a "sinner." Who is really deviating from the teachings of the Torah? Are the "lost sheep" who have been waiting for their shepherd? Or maybe it is the Perushim themselves?

In the analogy, a steward -- someone in charge of property or financial accounts -- is being called for an account. In this case, his boss has discovered that the steward has been wasting his boss' possessions, which is grounds for dismissal.

"I know what I will do, so that when I am put off of my stewardship they will receive me into their houses.' And calling each one of his lord's debtors to him, he said to the first, 'For how much are you indebted to my lord?' Now he said, 'One hundred baths of oil.' Now he said to him, 'Receive your receipt. Also sit down quickly and write one for fifty.'

After being told that he was about to be fired, the steward realized that from that point on he would have no means of securing himself financially. This unjust steward decided to reduce the debts of his boss' debtors. Although his boss would be angered, those whom he forgave would be indebted to him.

"Then he said to another one, 'Now how much are you indebted?' Now he said, 'One hundred cors of wheat.' He said to him, 'Receive your receipt, and write one for eighty.' And the lord praised the unjust steward because he had done prudently. Because the sons of this age are more prudent for their generation than are the sons of light.

Whether oil or wheat, whatever the steward's debtors owed, the steward reduced those debts. Yet rather than being angry as the steward would have supposed, his boss was pleased. Why? Because the unjust steward was able to gain useful relationships from the other businessmen by reducing their debts.

Jesus' comment begins his application: the people who live their lives for material things are wiser sometimes than Jesus' own followers. You can imagine their ears perking up at that comment!

"And I am telling you, make friends for yourselves from the unjust mammon, so that when it should fail, they will receive you into eternal tents. The one who is trustworthy with a little is also trustworthy with much, and the one who is unjust with a little is also unjust with much. Therefore, if you have not become trustworthy with the unjust mammon, who will entrust a true thing to you? And if you have not become trustworthy in the other things, who will give you what is yours?"

Material things, including money, are personified as the deity mammon. Jesus urges his followers to use their possessions to make friends. This does not come by being foolish but by giving freely and wisely. Jesus is about to address the issue of "priorities," for which is more important: friendship or possessions?

Clearly, friendship is more important, and kindness to others will be recognized. Possessions are transitory, or as the saying goes, "You can't take it with you." In fact, you might even lose money or possessions in this life. When that happens, if your priorities are right, then you'll still have what is really important.

God recognizes that if someone cannot be trustworthy in dealing with meaningless things like money and possessions, what sort of person will you be in a relationship? And in the long run, what will you have? Nothing.

"No house servant is able to be enslaved to two lords. For either he will hate one and love the other, or he will hold on to one and ignore the other. You are unable to serve God and Mammon."

No one is able to have more than one top priority. For the child of light -- the follower of Jesus -- God must be his top priority. Whenever priorities conflict with one another, the higher priority is the one that wins the conflict. God's principles must always win the conflict with anything else that comes up against God. In particular, God must be more important than material possessions, which Jesus summarizes by saying, "you are unable to serve God and Mammon."

14 *Now the Perushim, who are money-lovers, heard these things, and they mocked him. And he said to them, "You are the ones who are justifying yourselves in the presence of human beings, but God knows your hearts. Because what is elevated among humans is an abomination in God's presence. The Torah and the Prophets were until John. From then, God's kingdom has been announced as a good message, and everyone is invading it. But it is easier for the sky and the land to pass away than for one diacritical mark to fall from the Torah."*

Jesus' first application of the matter of priorities is to the Perushim around him. Lukas comments for us that they loved money. They were materialistic, and their materialism was a priority in their lives. And so, Jesus begins his rebuke:

"You are the ones who are justifying yourselves...." The Perushim used their religion to make themselves appear godly. People saw their behavior and assumed they loved God. But God knew that they didn't have their priorities right.

People, including the Perushim, were trying to force their way into God's kingdom. That is, they were "invading" what wasn't theirs. Indeed, it was people like the Perushim -- who were religious but who valued other things more than God's principles -- who would never accept Jesus' spiritual teachings. They were the ones who were letting the Torah go; Jesus was affirming it. God's message did not abolish the Torah; on the contrary, he explained it as spiritual. But the religion of the Perushim consisted of rituals and rules: where to go; when to go there; what to do there. Their religion was nothing at all, and their priority system ignored the Torah entirely.

"Each one who lets his wife go and who marries another is committing adultery. And the one who marries the one who was let go by a man is committing adultery."

Most commentators believe that this was a parenthetical remark on Jesus' part or that it does not belong here. On the contrary, this segment belongs exactly here, and although Jesus' comments are true by themselves, he was applying the teachings on adultery to the current issue.

The Perushim had the Torah, but in holding other priorities, they had let it go. They had "divorced" it to marry another. They had put themselves (or pride, or possessions) above the Torah now and therefore were committing adultery. And nothing else that they did -- apart from returning to God -- would relieve them of that state. They had once committed themselves to serving God, but they had ignored that commitment. God's principles were being set aside because of their attitudes. And so, it was not the "sinners" who honestly sought God but the Perushim who sought mere religion in the pursuit of other things -- these were the real violators of the Torah.

19 *"Now there was a certain wealthy person. And he was clothed in purple and fine linen, being brightly glad every day. But a certain poor one named Lazaros was laid facing toward his gate, covered in sores and strongly desiring to be well fed by that which fell from the wealthy person's table. But also the dogs came and licked his sores."*

This analogy is typically called the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazaros. Jesus often introduced his analogies without warning and with no more indication that they were beginning than an apparent change in topic. That is the case here, and the fact that Jesus was still talking about the distinction between those who listened to him and those who did not would not come until the end of this analogy.

The "wealthy person" represents the Perushim and all the others who had heard Jesus and still preferred their own ways to God's teachings. The Greek form "Lazaros" comes from "Eleazar," which means "God is helper." Therefore, although Lazaros was not wealthy, God was with him. Jesus portrays him as being somewhat downtrodden by the rich people of his society, and remember that the wealthy who rejected Jesus frequently believed in classist behavior. Material possessions were supposed to be a sign of God's approval, but it was Lazaros who belonged to God's kingdom. The situation depicts physical misery.

"Now it happened that the poor one died, and he was brought away by messengers into Abraham's bosom. Now the rich one died also and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted his eyes and saw Abraham from a long distance, and Lazaros in his bosom. And he

sounded out, saying, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazaros, so that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and might cool my tongue. Because I am in pain in this flame!'

The situation described after the deaths of the two men is meant to be instructive about Jesus' themes. It is not a description of the afterlife. In fact, Jesus seems to have borrowed his analogy from certain kinds of popular tales of the period. In the analogy, "Abraham's bosom" represents the most wonderful place that a person could be. For the Jewish person, being with Abraham was a wonderful reward.

Jesus portrays the rich man as still conscious after death, in order to reach his point (below). He also portrays the rich man as able to both see and converse with Lazaros. He was in flames (suffering destruction), and he hoped that Lazaros would serve him by easing his torment.

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received good things, and similarly Lazaros received bad things. But now here he is comforted, but you are in pain. And among all these things, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed. And so, the ones who want to cross over from here to you are unable. Nor are you able to cross over from there to us.'

In the analogy, Abraham hears the rich man's call but answers him harshly. After death, it is impossible to change one's fate.

"Now he said, 'Then I am begging you, father, so that you would send him into my father's house (for I have five brothers) -- so that he might fully testify to them, in order that they would not also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets. They should hear them.'

There are many more people like the Perushim who are still on earth. The rich man theorizes that if a dead man were to raise and tell them definitively what was going to happen to them, then they would reform, trust God, and live their lives with right priorities.

Abraham disagrees, however. God has already provided instruction through the Torah and Prophets. They already know how they are supposed to live. Everyone ought to live by God's principles as he taught them; there will be no excuses at the time of death.

"But he said, 'No, father Abraham. But if someone should go to them from the dead, they will change their minds.' But he said to him, 'If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from among the dead.'"

"No, father Abraham." In the analogy, the rich man disagrees. The Torah means nothing to the Perushim or to those like them. They have rejected it, but they would accept a powerful sign from God -- like Lazaros being raised from the dead.

The Perushim had continued to seek signs from Jesus, and he had shown the people many signs. But no amount of signs was enough, since the Jewish leaders had already made up their minds about him. They refused Jesus' teachings and therefore would not accept him no matter what signs he performed. Predicting his own resurrection, Jesus wryly remarked that if someone is not

honestly seeking God (through the Torah and Prophets), he will not believe no matter what signs are shown him. Indeed, even after Jesus' resurrection, they will not be persuaded to give themselves to God. In this Jesus was right, for even after his resurrection, they sought only to suppress those who taught what Jesus had taught.

XLI

17:1 *Now he said to his students, "It is impossible for stumbling blocks not to come. However, woe to the one through whom they come! There would be more freedom for him if a stone of milling were hung around his neck, and if he were hurled into the sea, than for him to cause one of these little ones to stumble! Watch out for yourselves."*

Matthaiah's longer account indicates that more has happened between the last event and this one. His students had asked him a question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens?" This prompted a short discussion about the humble attitude of small children -- some were in the crowd at the time. Jesus explained that it was impossible to enter the kingdom if you wanted to obtain a position or rank. "Stumbling blocks" (Mt 18:7) refer not to temptations in general but to those people who might try to lure honest Christians back into the ritual religion of the Perushim.

It is quite predictable that people will try to persuade Jesus' followers to go back into religiosity. But whoever might cause others to seek position or rank, that person is doomed. The image is that it would be better to be removed from society and drowned (with a millstone around one's neck) than to convince others to seek positions among God's people.

"If your brother should sin, censure him. And if he should change his mind, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times daily, and if he turns back to you seven times, saying, 'I'm changing my mind,' you will forgive him."

Since all Christians are of equal rank or authority, there is a responsibility to each how to treat one another. If someone does something wrong to you, and if he is unconcerned about having hurt you, censure him. On the other hand, trust enough to forgive him if he honestly seeks forgiveness. If he knows he has done wrong and wants to do right, you should forgive. Constant stumbling is a sign of weakness, not of evil. Those who are weak need the love and trust of their fellow Christians.

5 *And the envoys said to the lord, "Add to our trust." Now the Lord said, "If you have trust like a grain of mustard, you would even say to this sycamore tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would even listen to you."*

But it is hard to trust those who have wronged you. Even Jesus' closest associates had to ask for more trust. How can one forgive so trustingly? And Jesus' reply indicates the power of trust. Trust enables someone to go well beyond what *seems* to be possible. If only they would trust God, they would be able to do whatever was needed of them -- and so much more.

"Now which of you who has a slave that ploughs or feeds cattle will say to him as he is entering from the field, 'Immediately go and recline?' On the contrary, won't he tell him, 'Make ready

what I am to have for supper; and after you wrap yourself, serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and after these things, you will eat and drink?' He has no thanks for the slave, because he did what he was directed to do. So also it will be for you, when you have done all the things that were directed to you. You will say that, 'We are unnecessary slaves, because we only did what we were bound to do.'"

It is not enough to trust only as much as others trust. God's true student must serve well beyond what is expected. There is no reward in doing only what is expected. Jesus' students must try to do the best they can -- beyond expectations. Love and trust are not mere platitudes for Jesus but a way of life.

XLII

11 *Now while he was going into Jerusalem, it happened that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilaiah. And as he was entering into a certain village, ten lepers--who were standing from afar--met him. And they were sounding off, saying, "Master Jesus, have mercy on us!" And he noticed and said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And while they were going up, it happened that they were cleansed.*

After teaching in the areas surrounding Jerusalem, Jesus now makes his way directly to the city, for Passover is near. As he passed through the area between Samaria and Galilaiah, he encountered these ten lepers.

The fact that they had approached Jesus indicated that they had enough trust in God to realize that Jesus had the power from God to cure their disease. The Anointed One's reply was based on the teachings of the Torah. Whenever someone believed himself to be free of leprosy, it was necessary to show himself to a priest: *"Then, if the leprous disease has been healed in the leper, the priest will direct them to take two living clean birds, and cedarwood, and scarlet material, and hyssop, on behalf of the leper. The priest will direct them to kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water. ... And the one who is to be cleansed will wash his clothes, shave off his hair, and bathe himself in water. Then he will be clean. After that, he will enter the encampment, dwelling outside his tent for seven days. And on the seventh day, he will shave off the hair of his head, he will shave off his beard and eyebrows -- all his hair. Then he will wash his clothes and bathe his body in water. And he will be clean"* (Lev 14:4-9).

After a further offering to God (vv. 10-32), the leper was declared clean and was allowed to come into contact with other Israelites. It was a long and careful process, and the priests were responsible for examining the leper's skin to verify that the leprosy had left him. On this occasion, Jesus simply told the lepers to go to the priests, and the leprosy actually did not leave them until they were on their way.

Now one of them, noticing that he had been cured, returned, glorifying God with a loud voice. And he prostrated at Jesus' feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. Now Jesus answered, saying, "Weren't there ten that I cured? But where are the nine? Weren't any found to return to give glory to God except this stranger?" And he said to him, "Rise up and go. Your trust has saved you."

Each of the ten lepers had trusted enough to receive the curing, but one of them stopped. Instead of going immediately to the priests to begin the cleansing process, he returned to Jesus and thanked both him and God.

The other nine appear to have been focused on being declared clean, but this foreigner -- a Samaritan -- was joyful enough in his heart to make sure to give praise where it was due. The true followers of God are not determined by physical lineage but by attitudes within, and this Samaritan had the more noble attitude of thankfulness toward God. Again, this relates to having more trust than the minimum expected.

XLIII

20 Now when he was questioned by the Perushim as to when God's kingdom was coming, he answered, saying, "God's kingdom isn't coming with scrutiny. Nor will they say, 'Look, it's here or there.' For look, God's kingdom is within you."

The Perushim were hoping to pin down Jesus' Messianic claims. The Messiah was expected to establish a kingdom for God. "Alright then, when is this going to happen?" Had he named a specific time, they would have known what to anticipate. They may even have believed that Jesus was about to initiate a rebellion.

But God's kingdom is not physical. People would not be able to find it by looking with their eyes, because God's kingdom exists in the hearts of those who follow his principles. It is within.

22 Now he said to the students, "Days will come when you will strongly desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see one. And they will say to you, 'Look there,' or, 'look here.' Do not go away, nor should you follow. For just as that lightning that flashes from under the sky shines into another part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day."

The kingdom would be within, even though Jesus himself would be gone. People would look for him to return, physically, and they would not find him. His return would be like lightning. That is, although he would return spiritually (in judgment on Israel), his return would have physical effects -- just as lightning lights up places in the sky where it is not.

"But first it is necessary for him to suffer many things and to be rejected by this generation. And just as it happened in the days of Noah, it will be the same way in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were getting married, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all."

But the second coming of the Anointed One would not happen until after the first one was complete. In perhaps two weeks or less, Jesus would be rejected and caused to suffer. In fact, he would be crucified, although the term does not appear here.

As for the future, Jesus would return at a time when most people believed everything was normal, just as most people in Noah's day (Gen 6-7) never realized that judgment was coming on the land, because of the wickedness of the people.

"Similarly, this is just as it happened in the days of Lot. They were eating, they were drinking, they were purchasing, they were selling, they were planting, they were constructing. But on the day Lot exited from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

Similarly, the people of Sodom (Gen 19) were living as they had always lived. Lot's family escaped -- except for his wife -- but the rest were destroyed. They had decided to continue in their evils, rejecting God's guidance, and God destroyed them all.

"It will be according to the same things on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, don't let the one who is on the roof, with his goods in the house, descend to pick them up. And similarly, don't let the one who is in the field turn back. Remember Lot's wife!"

Judgment on Israel was about to come (c. 70 CE). At that time, it would be for many as it had been for the people in Noah's time or in Lot's time. The people would continue to oppose God, preferring their religion to the spiritual teachings of the Messiah, and God would destroy their religion.

Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus' followers who worked for him (metaphorically) not to "turn back" to Judaism, or they would be destroyed. Just as Lot's wife was turned into salt because she turned back even to look at Sodom (Gen 19:26). Looking back represented a desire to return to the ways of the other people, and so God had told them not to look back (Gen 19:17). Similarly, Jesus instructed his followers that God would destroy them too if they wished to remain in Priestly Judaism.

"The one who might seek to acquire his life will lose it, but the one who should ever lose it will save it. I am telling you: That night there will be two people on one bed; one will be taken along, the other will be dropped."

Persecutions and stumbling blocks were about to come, but this was a warning. Anyone who thought even to save his own life by remaining in ritual religion would have no access to God after it was removed. On the other hand, whoever followed Jesus' teachings without regard to his own safety would have eternal life. Yet by outward appearance, no one would be able to tell who was going to live and who was going to die.

And they answered, saying to him, "Where, Lord?" Now he said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

Where will this judgment take place? Jesus' reply is cryptic, but he was referring to the Jerusalem area. He was about to die in Jerusalem, and that would be where the great judgment took place. The temple would be destroyed, and the whole priestly way of life would cease to exist forever. The Roman armies would surround Jerusalem and lay siege to it, although it is unlikely that most of Jesus' students understood that yet.

XLIV

18:1 *Now for them to see it necessary to always pray and not to be weary, he told an analogy to them, saying, "There was a certain judge in a certain city who didn't fear God and didn't give*

place to any person. Now there was a widow in that city, and she came to him, saying, 'Grant justice for me from my opponent.' And he did not want to for a time. But after these things, he said within himself, 'Even if I don't fear God or give place to any person, indeed on account of the trouble that this widow brings me, I will grant her justice, so that in the end she should not come to bother me!'"

In the face of the coming struggle between Jesus' followers and their own (Jewish) people, Jesus wanted his students to understand that they would want to give up, but that they must not let that happen. The purpose of this analogy, then, was that they needed to continue to trust in God, realizing always that he would grant them a victory and a place in God's kingdom, so long as they never returned to the religion of positional leadership and ritual acts.

In the story, an annoying and corrupt judge decides to grant a widow her request, for the sole purpose of avoiding her constant pleadings. Is God like that? Hear more:

Now the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge says. But won't God grant justice for those of his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? And he is longsuffering toward them. I am telling you that he will do justice for them in a quick time. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he indeed find trust on the land?"

If even an unjust judge as that one will grant a request in order to escape the perpetual pleading, won't God grant earnest prayers? After all, God is both just and loving. He wants to hear the prayers of his chosen ones. He listens to them, ignoring their faults in his longsuffering manner. Justice for them would come quickly, and indeed the siege of Jerusalem did not last long.

Jesus' question for himself is almost haunting, for he appears to be wondering whether anyone would last through the revolt, still remaining loyal to God's teachings. The question is rhetorical and intended as a teaching tool. His students would hear that question and answer to themselves in the affirmative, becoming determined to remain faithful to the end.

XLV

9 Now he also told this analogy to certain ones who had persuaded themselves that they were just, and who despised others:

After praising and elevating trust, Jesus now turns to the power and necessity of love toward others. How can someone be justified in God's presence and yet be bigoted toward others? Jesus' analogy, the Perush ("Pharisee") and the Tribute Taker, shows that this cannot happen.

"Two people went up into the temple court to pray. One was a Perush, and the other was a tribute taker. The Perush, standing by himself, prayed these things, 'God, I thank you that I am not like the remaining people: plunderers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tribute taker. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of all that I acquire.'

The Perush was not hateful in the sense that there were specific people toward whom he had animosity. Instead, he was merely bigoted, believing himself to be superior to other people

around him. Some translators even render the passage, "the Perush prayed these things to himself," but that translation goes too far. The Perush did not believe himself to be God, but he did think that because he performed the rituals that he *thought* made him closer to God, he was superior to other people, including the tribute taker who was nearby.

"But the tribute taker, who was standing a large distance away, did not want to even lift his eyes up to heaven. On the contrary, he struck his chest, saying, 'God, make atonement for me, the sinner!'"

On the other hand, the tribute taker realized his own faults. He felt so ashamed of the wrong things that he had done that he could not look upward -- which was normally done as a gesture of "looking to God." All he wanted from God was forgiveness for his mistakes.

"I am telling you, the latter one went down to his house more justified than the former. Because each one who elevates himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be elevated."

People respected the Perushim because they did so many religious things. They hated the tribute takers, who were often corrupt and who colluded with the Roman government. Yet many religious leaders around them who were socially acceptable had become lovers of religion rather than of God. They treated other people as social outcasts, believing that their religious ways were superior. Instead of loving others, they were bigoted.

On the other hand, many of these social outcasts had become Jesus' students, only wanting to do what God wanted them to do. In the long run, God would elevate those who were humble, and those who seemed to be something would be humbled by God. No one with a superior attitude could be part of God's kingdom.

15 *Now they also brought babies to him, so that he would touch them. But when the students noticed, they censured them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Allow the children to come to me, and don't forbid them. For God's kingdom belongs to ones like these. Indeed, I am telling you: whoever does not accept God's kingdom like a child will by no means enter into it!"*

Once again, Jesus emphasized the difference between the concept of religion and the spiritual Torah. By no means would anyone be able to enter God's kingdom without abandoning the notion of becoming more than an equal to anyone.

Jesus' students believed that the children were an annoyance, but Jesus loved children and realized how important their humble attitude was. Young children do not seek to become great; they are content being whomever and whatever they are. God's teachings to his people emphasize putting the needs of others ahead of one's self. Only someone who is humble like a child is capable of putting away selfishness to that extent.

18 *And a certain one of the rulers questioned him, saying, "Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" But Jesus said to him, "Why do you say I am good? No one is good except God. You know the precepts:*

This encounter is often called "Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler." As Jesus was explaining the attitudes necessary to be a child of God, it was natural for someone to have asked what is necessary, as this man did.

The label of "good" appears to have upset Jesus, but this was not the case. In fact, in Lukas' own account Jesus' has already referred to a servant who does his master's work well as a "good slave." Later on, he describes Yosef of Aramathaea as a "good and just man." The label of "good" does not mean that the man was equating Jesus with God, but Jesus rejects that label here, for in referring to Jesus by the honorific "Good Teacher," the man sought rabbinical advice from Jesus just as he might have done from the Perushim or from other teachers.

Jesus was not concerned with what his own opinion was, or with the opinions of others. It was a necessity to look instead at what God had said. The man wanted to hear Jesus' opinion as to what was absolutely necessary; instead, Jesus focused the ruler on doing the most that God might have him do.

"You know the precepts" is a mild reproof. The man was schooled in the Torah. He need not have asked Jesus the question that he asked, apart from seeking opinion. Yet Jesus would supply him more.

"Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother."

These precepts come from the Decalogue ("Ten Words") spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai. The order here follows the order in the Septuagint, but notice that Jesus has omitted the earlier precepts about putting God first and the last few about coveting things. This sets up the ruler, who is about to claim that he keeps God's precepts.

But he said, "I have been guarding these things from my youth." Now Jesus, having heard, said to him, "One thing still remains. Sell all of what you have, and give to poor people, and you will have a treasure in the heavens, and come follow me." Now when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful, for he was extremely wealthy.

Jesus earlier had said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon," implying that it is possible to serve another "god" without actually bowing down to an idol. Yet the same set of instructions that contained the precepts on Jesus' list (above) also clearly said to "have no other gods" but Yahweh. Jesus realized that, as part of the leadership, this ruler was a man who valued his possessions greatly -- perhaps above God.

"Sell all of what you have" is an exaggeration. What Jesus intends for the man to do is to forget about physical property and money. God must be first in his life, and until God is first, he will have no "treasure in the heavens." The man staggered off, stunned by Jesus' words and worried that he might not be capable of putting God first. We do not know what happened to the ruler after this.

And when Jesus noticed it, he became very sorrowful and said, "How hard it is for those who have high-priced things to go into God's kingdom! For it is easier for a camel to enter through the hole of a dart than for a wealthy person to enter into God's kingdom!"

For "dart," the word "needle" is also acceptable. Some try to replace Jesus' absurdity -- "camel" - with another word meaning "rope." Others theorize that Jesus was not talking about a dart or needle *per se* but about a small city gate. More likely, he was deliberately being absurd. Perhaps he held up a dart, saw a camel nearby, and came up with the image.

Possessions are a tremendous hindrance to following God. Yet it is not evil merely to own things. The evil comes in failing to put God first. The analogy of the unjust steward has already illustrated that it is acceptable to have possessions, but the possessions must serve a greater purpose other than to supply physical desires. When riches fail, that is when you'll know whether or not God is your top priority. And that is what Jesus wanted for this rich young ruler...and for everyone.

Now those who were hearing said, "And who is able to be saved?" But he said, "The things that are impossible with human beings are possible with God." But Peter said, "Look, we have left our own things and followed you."

"Saved" refers to being rescued from the coming judgment, which rescue his students still expected would be physical. If they had to put aside all of their possessions in order to serve God, how would God rescue them from the coming judgment? What would he do to protect them? Jesus said simply that they should trust God, with whom everything is possible.

Peter's implication was that he himself had already demonstrated that he put God's message ahead of his personal goods. And he was right in saying that.

But he said to him, "Indeed I am telling you that there is no one who has left a wife or brothers or parents or children on account of God's kingdom who will not receive many times more in this season, and eternal life in the coming age."

As the then-current age ended in judgment, Jesus' true followers need not worry. After all, not only did God realize that Peter and the others had put Yahweh first, but also he was about to reward them with something that extended well beyond the present age of temple Judaism. God's reward for them was eternal, spiritual life.

Part Four

XLVI

31 *Now when he took aside the Twelve, he said to them, "Look, we are going up into Jerusalem, and all of the things that were written through the prophets will be completed by the Son of Man. For he will be delivered up to the gentiles, and he will be mocked, and he will be reproached,*

and he will be spit on, and after whipping him they will kill him, and he will resurrect during the third day."

This marks the beginning of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. They were not far from Jericho at this time, and from here they headed straight to Jerusalem. As they prepared to make that final journey, Jesus explained what was about to happen in more detail than ever before.

And they understood none of these things, and this declaration was hidden from them, and they did not know what was being spoken.

Unfortunately, the Twelve were still not ready to comprehend the fact that Jesus was preparing to die. The author has provided us with a triple affirmation of their inability to receive what Jesus had said.

XLVII

35 *Now while he was nearing Jericho, it happened that a certain blind man was seated by the road, begging. Now when he heard a crowd going by, he inquired as to what this might be. Now they related to him that Jesus the Nazarene was coming by. And he shouted, saying, "Jesus, son of David! Have mercy on me!"*

Lukas' source, Matthaiah, includes an additional blind man as a co-witness to this account, while Markus adds one detail: that the man's name was Bar-Timaeus, which means "son of Timaeus." Since blindness (among other afflictions) was regarded by some people as an indicator of sin, this blind man was one of the "social outcasts" with whom Jesus dealt regularly. His attitude and language indicates that he both knew who Jesus was and believed that he could help him.

And the ones who were going ahead of Jesus censured him, so that he would be silent, but he cried out still more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Now Jesus stood still and gave word for the man to be led to him. Now when he got near, Jesus inquired of him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Other people in the crowd were bothered by the man's shouting, but Jesus heard the man's pleading and asked that he be led through the crowd to him.

Now he said, "Sir, do something so that I might see again." And Jesus said to him, "See again. Your trust has saved you." And immediately he could see again, and he followed him, glorifying God. And when all the people noticed, they gave praise to God.

The man had shouted out his knowledge that Jesus was the Anointed One, and he had believed that God had given Jesus the ability to make him see again. His wording, "do something," indicates that he really didn't know what Jesus would do, but he knew that God's power was in him. Jesus praised the man's trust, and he was able to see. Typical of the "honest social outcast," the man followed Jesus from that point on, and the people in the area rightly praised God.

XLVIII

19:1 *And after entering, he was going through Jericho. And look, there was a man whose name was called Zacchai, and he was a chief tribute taker, and he was wealthy. And he sought to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, because his stature was small. And he ran in front and climbed up a sycamore tree, so that he might see him, because he was about to come by.*

The account of Zacchai the tribute taker is most interesting. First of all, he was wealthy. We have recently read how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter God's kingdom, and yet this man was wealthy. He was also a tribute taker, and for reasons mentioned earlier, a wealthy tribute taker was assumed to be corrupt. Socially, the man was most likely unacceptable to those who believed that Zacchai made his living by demanding unreasonable sums from his fellow Jews in order to split the profits with the Roman government.

And as he came to the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchai, hurry. Climb down, for today it is necessary for me to stay in your house." And he hurried and climbed down, and he received Jesus rejoicing.

Jesus called Zacchai by name when it is clear from the context that they had never met. Therefore, either God told Jesus who this wealthy man was who had humbled himself to the point of climbing a tree, or more mundanely, someone in the crowd mentioned to Jesus that the man in the tree was a tribute taker named Zacchai.

Either way, he was overjoyed at the fact that Jesus wanted to remain with him that evening. Given his social standing, how would this play out?

And when they noticed, they all griped, saying, "He went to lodge with a man who is a sinner." But Zacchai stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, I give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted from anyone, I give back fourfold." Now Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has happened to this house, because he is also a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what had been lost."

For social reasons mentioned previously, the people were outraged that Jesus would choose to stay with a man whom they regarded as sinful. Yet to Jesus, Zacchai was one of those "lost sheep" who had wandered away from Judaism and whom Jesus was going to call back. The discussion reveals that Zacchai was not as people perceived him but was an honest tribute taker.

Jesus' mission to the Jewish people ("sons of Abraham") included these lost sheep. Certainly, Ezekiel mentions "seeking the lost" as only one role of the Messiah, but in accepting this tribute taker as one of his own students, Jesus was fulfilling a Messianic role. Given the timeline ahead, the date at this time is Friday, the 7th day of the month of Nisan. Jesus would rest on the Sabbath and then proceed to Jerusalem.

11 *Now as they heard these things, he continued and told an analogy, on account of his nearness to Jerusalem, and because they thought that God's kingdom was about to immediately appear. Therefore, he said:*

Many of Jesus' followers were still fixated on the idea that God's kingdom was physical. Since he had begun to talk about the need for his presence in Jerusalem, some of them suspected that he would establish a throne for himself.

"A certain nobleman went into a distant country, to take a kingdom for himself and to return. Now after calling ten of his slaves, he gave them ten manim and said to them, 'Do business, during which I will come.'"

God was about to judge Israel, but this judgment would not come immediately, nor would it be in the manner that they expected. The "slaves" represent anyone who was supposed to be practicing God's principles, and the different amounts of manim (silver or gold money) represent different amounts of understanding.

"But his citizens hated him, and they sent out a group of ambassadors after him, saying, 'We don't want this one to be king over us!' And it happened that when he came back after receiving his kingdom, he told those servants to whom he had given the silver to sound off to him, so that he would know what each one had done in business."

The citizens who hate God and who reject him as king were like those who had rejected Herod. Here, though, they are the Jewish people who refuse to follow God's principles, preferring instead to remain in their religion.

"Now the first happened by, saying, 'Lord, your maneh has been worked into ten for you.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you became trustworthy in a small thing, have authority over ten cities.'"

"And the second one came, saying, 'Lord, your maneh has been made into five manim.' Now he said also to this one, 'And you become over five cities.'"

The fact that one had more than another is not relevant. Each had taken what he had and had gained proportionately. They had put God's principles into practice and had matured, spiritually.

"And another came saying, 'Lord, look at your maneh, which I had, folded up in a napkin. For I was afraid of you, because you are a difficult person. You take up what you have not set down, and you reap what you have not sown.'"

It is also not relevant that this person only had one maneh. Even if he had been the one with ten, had he not put the principles into practice and learned, the result, which follows, would have been the same.

"He said to him, 'I will judge you out of your own mouth, you evil slave! You knew that I am a difficult person, taking up what I have not set down reaping what I have not sown. And why didn't you give my silver to a bank, and when I came I might have used it in business with interest?'"

One cannot make excuses to God at the time of judgment. Either you are practicing his principles, or you are not. Why teach them at all to someone who says he will practice them and does not?

"And to those who were standing by, he said, 'Remove the maneh from him, and give it to the one who has the ten manim.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten manim.'"

People objected to the one with ten manim receiving still more, but that person had learned much by putting many principles into practice.

"I am telling you that it will be given to everyone who has. But from the one who doesn't have, even what he has will be removed. However, lead those enemies of mine here who did not want me to be king over them, and slaughter them in my presence."

If you practice God's principles of trust and love, your maturity will deepen. If you hear them and don't practice them, you will wind up with nothing. As for those who simply refused to listen, they would suffer the judgment of the First Revolt.

And after saying these things, he went on ahead, going up into Jerusalem.

XLIX

29 *And as he was nearing Bethfagge and Bethany, at the mountain called Olive Trees, it happened that he sent out two of the students, saying, "Go up into the village over there. When you enter, you will find in it a colt, tied up, on which no human beings ever sat. And untie it, and lead it back. And if someone should ask you, 'Why are you untying it,' you will say this: 'Because the Lord has need of it.'"*

The date is now Sunday, 9 Nisan. Johannes also mentions his arrival in Bethany and assigns it that date (12:1). Jesus spends the night there as his students make arrangements for him in Jerusalem.

Jesus had prearranged this visit, including the colt. As an aside, there are some who teach that everything Jesus instructed his students to do is bound for everyone. It would be interesting if each of his followers were to go into Jerusalem, untie a horse, and take it -- simply telling the owner that the Lord needs it!

Now the ones who had been sent forth went out and found it, just as he had told them. Now as they were untying the colt, its lords said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' Now they said, 'Because the Lord has need of it.' And they led it to Jesus, and after casting their cloaks on the colt, they secured Jesus on it. Now as he was going, they spread out their cloaks on the road.

The matter is repeated so that the reader will be aware that Jesus' students followed his directions exactly.

When the procession into town begins, it is now 10 Nisan, Monday. John's account notes the date (12:12). Not coincidentally, this was the date, historically, when the Passover lamb -- which was to be killed and eaten at the Passover meal -- was brought into the household (Ex 12:4). Jesus' students treated him royally, as one would treat a most royal visitor or conqueror.

Now as he was already nearing to the descent of the Mountain of Olive Trees, all the crowd of students began, rejoicing, to praise God, with a loud voice about all the powerful things that they had seen, saying, "The king who comes in Yahweh's name is praised!" Peace in heaven, and glory in the high places!"

The crowds became even greater as Jesus neared the city, calling out praises to God because his Anointed One had arrived. The quote comes from both Zechariah 9:9 and Psa 118:26. The scene in Zechariah depicts the Anointed One's humble arrival, not on a great and noble steed but on a colt, the foal of a donkey -- a symbol of both humility and peace. Zechariah goes on to indicate that the Anointed One's kingdom would be vast and that he would be a peacemaker (9:10). Of course, the kingdom was within, spiritual, and so was the peace.

And some of the Perushim from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, censure your students!" And he answered, saying, "I am telling you, if they become mute, the rocks will cry out!"

His students' praise drew the aggravation of the Perushim. As the crowds began to praise Jesus as an arriving king, the religious leaders asked that Jesus tell them to shut up. Jesus' reply indicates the veracity -- the strength of the truth -- of what the crowds were saying. Their shouts were so true that even if they were muted, the rocks themselves would cry out to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

And as he neared, he noticed the city and cried about it, saying, "If only you knew in this day the things that are directed toward peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes. Because days will come upon you when your enemies will throw an embankment around you, and they will hold you on every side. And they will flatten you and your children that are in you. And no stone in you will be left on top of a stone. About this, you don't know the season of your oversight."

Jesus wished to bring his peace to all of Jerusalem, but he realized that in general they would reject him. Therefore, he predicted more clearly the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. The great city would be surrounded by Roman soldiers, and chaos would erupt. Yet still, its citizens were unaware that these things would soon happen.

45 *And he entered into the temple court and began to throw out those who were selling, telling them, "It was written, "And my house will be a house of prayer." But you have made it "a den of robbers." And he was there, teaching in the temple court by day. Now the high priests and the scribes sought to destroy him, and so did the foremost ones of the people. And they did not find out what they might do, for the people were all hanging on, hearing him.*

This second "cleansing of the temple court" indicated that the end of Jesus' work was near. He had begun that work at Passover season a few years past by driving out the money-changers and salesmen. This time, he cited both Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11. The context in Isaiah deals with blessing

those who keep God's principles. For them, God's mountain would be "a house of prayer" where sacrifices are accepted. God would gather "the outcasts of Israel" into a relationship with him. The passage was originally applied to one location, but Jesus was interested in the principle of faithful devotion to God. The salesmen weren't interested in prayer or service to God but in their own financial profit.

The context of Jeremiah indicates that the people then believed that the existence of the temple was a sign that God supported Israel and would protect them. Yet God told them, "Amend your ways and practices, and I will let you dwell in this place" (v. 3). By mending their ways, God explained, he meant that his people need to treat one another lovingly. But since the people did not love one another, nor serve God, he would destroy the temple (v. 14-15) and scatter the people. Something similar was about to happen in Jesus' time.

Lukas points out for his readers that Jesus spent the next few days teaching in the temple courts. Some of these teachings were much more detailed and pointed than ever before and are described below. The religious leaders, aggravated that crowds of people were beginning to listen to him, spent the week trying to trick him and hoping to find a way to rid themselves of him.

L

20:1 *And during one of the days, it happened as he was teaching the people in the temple court and announcing the good message that the high priests and the scribes were standing with the old people, and they spoke, saying to him, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Or who is it that gave you this authority?" Now he answered, saying to them, "And I will ask you a saying. So, tell me, was John's baptism from heaven or from people?"*

The question about authority concerned soundness of tradition. Representatives of the priests were there, and no one in the priestly tradition agreed with Jesus' interpretation of the Torah. Some scribes were present, who were familiar with the rabbinical interpretations of the day. They knew that Jesus was not following one of those traditions. The older people were learned also and would have been familiar to some degree with the priestly and rabbinical traditions and also with oral traditions and perhaps the non-canonical writings. Therefore, when they asked who gave Jesus his authority, it was thought that he would name a particular teacher (Shammai or Hillel, perhaps), or that he would name a specific school of thought (the ascetic Essenes, certain Perushim or Zadokites, or even Zealot teachers).

They did not understand that it was not a valid question to ask a prophet. Jesus' retort was not a point of evasion but a matter of invalidating their question. Unlike Jesus, John had performed no signs indicating that he was a prophet, and yet the people recognized him as a teacher. Jesus was proclaiming a similar reformation movement to John's; consequently, had they acknowledged where John obtained his authority, Jesus could have rightly claimed to be the Anointed One whom John had forecasted.

But they reasoned to one another together, saying, "If we should say, 'from heaven,' he will say, 'Why didn't you trust him?' But if we should say, 'from people,' the people will all stone us, for

they are persuaded that John was a prophet." And they answered, "We don't know where it was from." And Jesus said to them, "Neither am I telling you by what authority I am doing these things."

Instead of providing an honest opinion, the leaders revealed that they were not really interested in learning where Jesus obtained his authority. Their reasoning simply served to help them escape the notion that they were speaking to a true prophet, or that John had been a prophet. And since they were not interested in knowing the truth -- even though Jesus' signs confirmed his identity -- Jesus had no need to answer their question. It would not serve to tell them if they weren't really interested in knowing.

9 *Now he began to tell this analogy to the people: "A certain person planted a vineyard, and he rented it to gardeners, and he went abroad many times. And one season, he sent out a slave to the gardeners, so that they would give him of the fruit of the vineyard. But the gardeners sent him away empty, after whipping him.*

The vineyard is the Torah, and the gardener is God. For many years, God had allowed others to rule over his people. The slave represents a prophet -- a spokesman between God and his people. Instead of practicing God's principles ("fruit") which had been explained in the Torah (the garden), the people beat the prophet and sent him away empty. It was a theme in Jesus' work to point out how Israel had treated the prophets before him.

"And he continued to send another slave. But after beating and dishonoring this one too, they sent him away empty. And he continued to send a third. But they also wounded this one and threw him out.

God was patient, sending prophet after prophet, in hopes that the people would eventually put the principles of the Torah into practice. But the prophets were beaten, wounded, and rejected.

"But the Lord of the vineyard said, 'What will I do? I will send my beloved son. When they see him, perhaps they will give place to him. But when they noticed him, the gardeners reasoned to one another, saying, 'This is the heir. We should kill him, so that the inheritance would become ours!' And they threw him outside of the vineyard and killed him.

The son, of course, represents the Messiah. In the analogy, the people reasoned that if they killed the Messiah, they would be able to keep their own interpretations of the Torah, together with their traditions. Without an "heir," they could claim that the Torah belonged rightly to them. So they killed him. This had not happened yet, but the death of the Anointed One was soon to come.

"Therefore, what will the Lord of the vineyard do to them? He will come and will destroy those gardeners, and he will give the vineyard to others."

Judgment was coming on Israel. Within forty years, Priestly Judaism would be destroyed, and Jesus' followers -- wherever they might be -- would be the only legitimate caretakers of the Torah.

Now when they heard, they said, "May it not be!" Now he looked closely at them and said, "Then what is this that was written? "A stone that the builders rejected, this one has become a cornerstone." Each one who falls on that stone will be bruised. But the one on whom it may fall, it will pulverize him."

As the people heard this and realized that Jesus was predicting the destruction of the Jewish way of life, they exclaimed some disbelief, hoping that it might never come to pass. But Jesus cited part of the Hallel, Psalm 118:22, part of one of the psalms that was sung regularly at the coming holiday, Pesach (Passover). His application was that the Anointed One was being rejected by the Jewish leaders but was about to become a cornerstone -- the foundation from which God's community would be constructed. To every other Jew would come judgment.

19 *And at that hour the scribes and the high priests sought to lay hands on him, and they were afraid of the people, for they knew that he had told that analogy directed toward them. And in scrutinizing him, they sent out spies who were acting like they were just, so that they might lay hold of his saying, in order to deliver him over to the rule and authority of the Governor.*

As Jesus pressed his teaching about the judgment on Israel -- because of the religious hierarchy - the religious leaders struggled to trick him, now seeking a means of turning him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilatus, for interment and execution.

And they asked him, saying, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and that you do not receive appearance. On the contrary, you teach the way of God on truth. Is it legal or not for us to give a tribute tax to Caesar?"

Simply put, they were trying to "butter Jesus up." By praising him, they hoped to catch him off guard with a difficult question. When the Romans conquered another land, they demanded tribute from the conquered areas. This tribute was "paying for the privilege" of being part of the Roman Empire. It served both to remind these nations that they were under Roman rule and to enrich the Empire financially. Some Jewish groups, notably the Perushim, considered it acceptable to pay tribute to Rome. As long as they did so and remained in peaceful subjection, the Roman government allowed them considerable leeway and a level of self-rule. The Perushim reasoned that they would lose any freedom that they possessed if they stopped paying tribute and began "making waves."

On the other hand, there were factions such as the one championed by the Zealots, who opposed any outside influence on the Jewish people. These people refused to have anything to do with things Roman, and every now and then they fomented rebellion.

If Jesus answered the question by merely agreeing with one party or the other, he would serve to alienate one faction or another and might lose followers.

Now, perceiving their craftiness, he said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" Now they said, "Caesar's." Now he said to them, "Then give Caesar's things to Caesar and God's things to God." And they were not strong enough to take hold of his declaration in the presence of the people, and they wondered at his answer and were silent.

In deference to the Zealots and other nationalists, Jesus did not touch the Roman coin, nor did his reasoning run like the reasoning of the Perushim. By noticing that the money was Caesar's, it could not be considered inappropriate to give it back to Caesar. On the other hand, the outcome would please those who supported the Perushim's position, because the effect of his statement was to support paying the tribute. Jesus' answer ended the questioning offered to him by the Perushim's supporters.

27 But some of the Zadokites, who say there is no resurrection, came toward him and asked him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, "If someone's brother should die" having a wife, and he should be "childless, his brother should take his wife and should raise up seed for his brother."

The term "resurrection" signifies "afterlife." The Zadokites reasoned that the Torah did not speak of any afterlife, nor did the Prophets conclusively point to life after death. Therefore, they did not believe in one, whereas the Perushim did.

Their question, then, came straight from Moses, although it was filtered through their logic. Moses had told the Israelites, *"If brothers live together, and if one of them dies and has no son, then the wife of the dead brother will not marry a stranger outside the family, but her husband's brother will sleep with her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears will succeed to the name of his brother who is dead, so that his name will not be blotted out in Israel."* (Dt 25:5-6)

This situation was used as a proof-text for the Zadokites to concoct a situation wherein Jesus must reason that there is no afterlife. He would have to agree with them.

"Therefore, there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife and died childless. And the second and the third took her. Now similarly also the seven left behind no children and died. Lastly, the wife died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them will the woman become? For the seven had her as a wife."

The situation was a complicated version of what they read in Deuteronomy. What if something like this happened seven times? But then they asked, "Whose wife will the woman become in the afterlife?"

And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But the ones who are considered worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection from among the dead neither marry nor are they given in marriage. For they are not able to still die. For those who are sons of the resurrection are equal to messengers and are sons of God."

Beyond the age in which Jesus and the Zadokites lived was the Messianic Age, and for everyone who lived godly lives there was the afterlife. But the afterlife does not feature "marriage" or sex as we know it here. Indeed, it is not physical, so that people in the afterlife cannot die. In that respect, they will be like messengers or even God.

The Zadokites had misinterpreted the passage. Instead of dealing with marriage, the passage was intended only to provide a means of passing on the family name when someone dies. That family

name is passed on here on earth, and so the ideas of fathering children and marriage were not intended to extend as we know them into the afterlife.

"But that the dead rise, Moses also disclosed (at the bush), as he says, 'Yahweh, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaak, and the God of Jacob.' But he is not a god of dead people, but of living, for to him all are alive."

Just as the Zadokites had supported themselves by quoting Moses, so also Jesus referred to Moses. Yet it was God's own words that Jesus quoted. Jesus noted that when God first introduced himself to Moses, he called himself "Abraham's God" and the others' (Ex 3:6). Moses was also to tell the people that Yahweh was their God (3:15). Jesus' reasoning was that since God is the god of living people and not dead people, then Abraham and the others were still alive -- in the afterlife. Jesus could have pointed to passages outside the Torah, but some of those passages were already subject to other interpretations. Only some of the Writings and later works, which were not yet regarded with the same stature as the Torah and Prophets, appear to clearly point to an afterlife. Jesus chose, then, to answer their quandary and to apply the Torah to support his case.

Now some of the scribes, answering, said, "Teacher, you have said well." For they did not dare to ask him anything any longer.

At this point, Jesus had answered the trickiest questions from a representative sample among those who opposed him, and even some among them agreed that he had provided a sound reply. His retort, then, was to question them in return.

41 *But he said to them, "How do you say that the Anointed One is David's descendant? For he, David, says in a scroll of psalms, 'Yahweh said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right side until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet.' Therefore, David calls him Lord. And how is he his descendant?"*

Israel was expecting a descendant of David to reign as God's Anointed One. They were right in that expectation, and Jesus fulfilled the matter of lineage. But they also reckoned the Messiah to be a great king. There was no conflict in that reasoning; however, since they regarded an ancestor to be superior (in a familial way) to his descendant, how was it that the Anointed One could be both David's lord (superior) and descendant (inferior)? The text that is the subject of the question is Psa 110:1, in which God invites the Messiah to ascend to a throne after his enemies are vanquished.

If they still remained in their perspective, the scribes could not answer the question. How could one person be another's superior and inferior at the same time? The answer was that they needed to change their way of thinking. As a descendant, the Messiah was not inferior even to his respected ancestor, David.

Now with all the people hearing, he said to his students, "Be careful about those scribes who want to walk in robes and who affectionately love greetings in the marketplaces and the front

seats in the gatherings and the first places at the feasts. They are devouring the households of the widows, and they pray a long time for show. They will receive a more abundant judgment."

This is a short form of Mattaiah 23:1-12. Matthaiah's account is more scathing, for the details depict Jesus pointing directly to the source of their problem: their religious hierarchy. The concept of positional leadership brings with it a certain arrogance or pompousness. This arrogance was a symptom to which Jesus could point, and then he addressed the problem itself. All of Jesus' followers must avoid the notion of positional leadership and must treat one another as equals, for only God and the Anointed One were worthy of being treated as superiors.

21:1 *Now he looked up and noticed the wealthy people casting their gifts into the coffer. But he noticed a certain poor widow casting two lepta in there, and he said, "Truly, I am telling you that this poor widow has cast in more than all. For all of these have cast into the gifts out of their abundance, but this one, out of her poverty, has cast in all of her living."*

The lepton was a small copper coin having very little value. The wealthy people believed that the amount of their gifts indicated their generosity, but the old widow's generosity was demonstrated in her desire to give whatever she had. True, she was giving to support a temple that would soon be destroyed, but it was her selfless attitude that Jesus praised. Although today there are to be no temples or religious hierarchies, we might learn from the widow and give to help one another with such generosity!

LI

5 *And to some who were saying, about the temple, that it was adorned with nice stones and offerings, he said, "These things that you are observing: days will come during which no stone will be left on a stone which will not be made to fall down."*

This begins Jesus' longest discussion of the "second coming" -- the coming in judgment on Israel. In all three synoptic accounts of Jesus' life, the discussion was precipitated by someone observing the grandeur of the temple. Jesus' response was not to be taken literally; that is, he did not mean that every stone would be removed from every other stone. Instead, he paints a portrait of utter desolation, indicating that the temple would never be useful again. In previous times (beginning the Exile and under Antiochus IV), the temple had been partially destroyed and desecrated, but in each case successful efforts had been made to rebuild the temple and to quickly restore the priesthood. After this destruction (70 CE), the priesthood would cease to exist.

But they asked him, saying, "Teacher, how then will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to happen?"

Lukas' account makes it clear that the scope of his students' question (on the Mountain of Olive Trees) was the coming destruction of the temple. Matthaiah's account points out that this coming judgment was known both as "the sign of the presence" (the Second Coming) and "the conclusion of the age." The pre-Messianic age, during which Priestly Judaism existed, with

God's people being defined by physical lineage, was about to end. Jesus' return would serve to judge those who would not accept his spiritualization of the Torah.

Now he said, "See to it not to be deceived. For many will come on my name, saying, 'It is I,' and, 'The season is nearing.' Do not go after them. For when you hear of wars and chaos, do not be frightened: for it is necessary for these things to happen first. But the end is not immediate."

Before getting to the judgment itself, Jesus dwells on the time span of approximately 40 years that were going to occur between his impending resurrection and the judgment. "Many will come" -- that is, he predicted that there would be those who claimed to be the Anointed One. There would also be people who were convinced that they thought that signs around them pointed to the judgment being closer than it was. Conflicts were going to happen first that had nothing to do with the judgment. In fact, this is exactly what happened.

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise upon nation, and kingdom upon kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes and famines and pestilences in places. And there will be both frights and great signs from heaven."

This statement is apocalyptic figurative language. Jesus was predicting conflict and strife, so that the social and political atmosphere would seem ominous. During the first few years of the First Revolt alone, the Zealot faction fostered hostility between Israel and Rome. Emperor Nero, who had murdered his mother and under whom there had been significant trouble already, was overrun by his Roman enemies and committed suicide. His successor, Galba, served for seven months before supporters of Otho executed him. Another faction, supporting Aulus Vitellius, was marching on Rome. After suffering a military defeat at their hands, Otho committed suicide, having served for only 95 days. Vitellius had actually wanted to make peace with Otho, but his soldiers supported him for Emperor. His rule was contested by Vespasian, whose men murdered him in the streets, after only eight months in power. It was Vespasian who finally crushed the Jewish rebellion and his forces that destroyed the temple. Social changes in Palestine were not quite as swift but were also made known in the land. The last procurator of Judea was supposed to have been Marcus Antonius Julianus, who is mentioned by the Jewish author Josephus in one place only. However, strife in the region was so high by this time, that it is actually not known for certain whether there were persons other than Julianus who also served in that capacity from 66 to 73.

"Now before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you over into synagogues and jails, leading you out to kings and governors on account of my name. It will turn out to be a testimony for you."

Turning to the status of the Twelve, Jesus remarks that the Jewish leaders would persecute them because they continued to teach Jesus' teachings, but they would be able to use that persecution to explain Jesus' identity and teachings to high ranking gentiles.

"Therefore, place it in your hearts not to premeditate to make a defense. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all of your opponents will not be able to speak against or stand against. But you will be delivered over even by parents, and brothers, and relatives, and friends."

And they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all on account of my name. And no hair from your head will by any means be destroyed. Acquire your souls with endurance.

The envoys were not to come up with a "canned response" to criticism or persecution, for Jesus was about to leave them with a gift from himself and from God -- holy breath -- a miraculous reminder of everything that Jesus had taught them. Yet they needed to be aware that even people whom they seemed to trust would hate them because of Jesus' teachings.

But on the good side, even though some of them would be executed for their allegiance to Jesus, their true spiritual selves could not be harmed. By enduring, they might lose their physical lives, but they would gain their spiritual lives (souls).

"Now when you notice Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then you should know that its desolation has come near. Then those who are in Judea should flee into the mountains, and those who are in the middle of it should depart out. And those who are in the country places should not enter Jerusalem. Because these are the days of retribution, so that all the things that were written would be fulfilled. Woe to those who hold babies in their bellies and to those who are nursing in those days! For there will be a great distress on the land and anger for this people. And they will fall by sword blades, and they will be led captive into all the nations. And Jerusalem will be stepped on by gentiles until seasons of gentiles should be fulfilled.

Next, Jesus provided them with a sign, so that his followers would know when the destruction of the temple was soon to take place. Once the Roman armies approached and surrounded Jerusalem, the end of the age was near. When they saw this, they should not feel the nationalistic need to fight for an earthly kingdom. Rather, they should flee into the mountains. Anyone outside Jerusalem should avoid it. Historically, their refusal to fight for Jerusalem widened the gap between Christians and their fellow Jews. The Roman armies would remain in the area until some time later, and actually the final battle at Masada did not take place for at least another three years.

Matthaiah's account refers to the coming of the Roman armies as a recurrence of what they had seen before when Antiochus IV Epiphanes had desecrated the temple. When the Roman standards were erected in the holy places, Jesus' students should flee. When Antiochus had taken the temple, entered it, and had desecrated it, that had been predicted by the book of Dani-El and had been called "the abomination of desolation" -- a disgusting thing that defiles. Jesus sign to his followers, then, reminded them of things that had already happened, pointing ahead to a likeness of what was about to occur.

"And there will be signs with sun and moon and stars, and on the land anguish of nations in confusion; of the sea, a roar and tossing. There will be a fainting away of people from fear and an expectation of the things that are coming to the Empire. For "the powers of the heavens" will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and much brilliance. But when these things are beginning to happen, straighten yourselves up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is nearing!"

The whole atmosphere then would be ominous. People would be fearful and confused, not literally dying of fear but afraid of the uncertainty. The language here is borrowed from Isaiah (see 34:4), Joel (see 2:10), Haggai (2:6, and 2:21), and possibly others who had spoken of the first destruction of the temple under Nabu-kudurri-usur in about 586 BCE. Similarly, coming in a cloud (or "with the clouds of the sky") was also language used of national and local judgment (see Dan 7:13, Zeph 1:15). Jesus intentionally described the coming destruction of the temple with the same language used of the first and second desecrations.

Matthaiah's account adds a few details, also indicating in this place that false Messiah's were coming.

And he told them an analogy: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they are already spreading out, and when you see it for yourselves, you know that summer is already near. In the same way also, when you notice these things happening, know that God's kingdom is near. Indeed I am telling you that this generation will by no means pass away until even all things have happened. The sky and the land will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

"God's kingdom" always existed in people's hearts. So what does Jesus mean? Once Judaism was removed, that would leave only his own interpretation of the Torah. No longer would there be a physical kingdom that practiced rites and ceremonies for God; only "the kingdom" would remain. The coming age was (and now is) the age of the kingdom.

"The sky and the land" -- This is an assurance not that Jesus' individual words would be preserved but that even if the land were to melt, that would not prevent his prophecy from coming true. He was assuring his students that the things God had shown him, and which he had told them, would definitely happen as he had said. History shows that they did happen.

Here, Matthaiah's account shows that Jesus told several analogies, so that his students would not let down their guards but would be watchful for the coming judgment on Israel.

"But pay attention to yourselves, lest your hearts be burdened with gluttony, and drunkenness, and life's anxieties, and that day should come upon you suddenly. For it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the land like a snare. But keep watch in every season, begging so that you might prevail to flee out of these things that are about to happen and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man."

If Jesus' students kept their eyes open, realizing that the judgment was going to happen soon, then they would see the signs and would flee to safety as he had instructed. On the other hand, if they ignored his advice and became overwhelmed with the mundane aspects of life, they would be caught unawares and would be trapped in Jerusalem when it was devastated. Therefore, they were urged to "keep watch" because these things would all happen in their lifetime, including the presence (return) of Jesus.

37 *Now by day he was in the temple courts teaching. But at night he exited and lodged at that mountain which is called Olive Trees. And all the people were coming early to him to hear him in the temple courts. Now the feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was nearing. And the high priests and the scribes sought how to kill him, for they feared the people.*

Lukas refers to the feast of Unleavened Bread. This week began on 14 Nisan and ended one week later. Traditionally, the second day of the feast was "the Passover" (15 Nisan), but at the time of Jesus it became acceptable to eat the Passover lamb during the first day of the feast. Colloquially, the whole feast was called "the Passover," which Lukas notes and which terminology Matthaiah also uses. At this time, it is still 12 Nisan.

The details show that Jesus did not sleep in town but spent his time at the Mountain of Olive Trees, a favorite place of his nearby, which he frequented. Matthaiah's account fixes the date at two days prior to the festival week.

Now the Enemy entered into Judah the one called Iscariot, who was from the number of the Twelve. And he went away and spoke with the high priests and captains about how he would deliver Jesus up to them. And they rejoiced, and they agreed to give him silver. And he fully acknowledged this, and he sought a good time to deliver him up to them without there being a crowd.

Matthaiah's and Markus' accounts possibly illustrate the reason for Judah's sudden betrayal. At dinner on the evening of the 12th/13th, at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman breaks open some expensive ointment and anoints Jesus with it. Judah was among those students who were upset that he was allowing the ointment to be "wasted" (Mt 26:8; Mk 14:4). Jesus' explanation was that he was being anointed for *burial*, clearly accepting that his death was about to come. Quite possibly, the fact that Jesus now intended to die sunk in for Judah, for both Matthaiah and Markus depict Judah as leaving right away to betray Jesus (Mt 26:14; Mk 14:10) - possibly intending to compel Jesus into claiming kingship.

LIII

22:7 *Now the day of Unleavened Bread came, during which it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. And he sent out Peter and Johannes, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat." Now they said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?" Now he said to them, "Look, after you enter the city, a person bearing a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow this one into the house into which he goes. And you will say to the ruler of the house, 'The teacher says to you, "Where is the chamber where I may eat the Passover with my students?"' And he will show you a large furnished upper room. Prepare the Passover there."*

Now it is the evening which began 14 Nisan, the day when the lambs were normally sacrificed. Jesus was planning to eat his meal that Thursday evening and was going to die the next day, during the afternoon of 14 Nisan. As with the colt, Jesus had prearranged the room where the dinner would take place.

Now they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Dinner was ready before dusk, and so Jesus joined his students for what would be his farewell dinner with them. At the beginning of a meal, it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of travelers who had been out walking. For ritual purposes, the Jewish leaders had directed also that one's hands should be washed. In Johannes' account, we observe that Jesus played the role of servant, washing his students' feet and directing them to serve one another (Jn 13:3-20).

14 *And when the hour happened, he reclined, and the envoys reclined with him. And he said to them, "I have strongly desired with strong desire to eat this Passover with you before my suffering. For I am telling you that I will by no means eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom. And after receiving a cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it for yourselves. For I am telling you that I will by no means drink from now on of the vine's product until God's kingdom comes."*

It was the early evening of Thursday, 14 Nisan, just after sunset. They would eat their meal between sunset and dusk. Matthaiah and Johannes note that Jesus also pointed out to the others that one of them would be responsible for turning him over to the Jewish leaders. At that time, they wondered who it might be.

During Pesach, four cups of wine were ordinarily consumed, at least from the time of the book of Jubilees (2nd century BCE) onward. The possibility of the rabbi becoming drunk became an issue, and eventually the wine was watered down to about one quarter strength. The cups poured from the server here probably comprised the opening drink. At this time, Jesus announced that it would be their final meal with him. Until they all died and joined him, they would no longer share such fellowship. No doubt, the comment was startling.

And, taking a loaf, he gave thanks and broke it, and he gave to them, saying, "This is that body of mine that is being given on your behalf. Do this for my remembrance." And he took the cup in the same way, after the dinner, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is being poured out on your behalf. However, look. The hand that is delivering me over is with mine on the table. Because indeed the Son of Man is going, according to what was defined. However, woe to that person through whom he is being delivered up."

There is some disturbance in the textual tradition here, with manuscript D and the early Latin tradition omitting the reference to the final cup, and some manuscripts altering the order of certain phrases.

As Jesus broke the *matzoh* that was part of the Passover Seder, he related it to himself: "This is my body." Just as the loaf was being broken, so also his body would be "broken" -- wounded and killed -- on behalf of his followers. The fellowship at their shared meal signified their relationship with one another and with Jesus; therefore, Jesus asked that they "do this for my remembrance." Here, "do this" signified eating a meal together, and "for my remembrance" denoted the manner in which they were to eat. In order to honor Jesus, they must share company lovingly, whenever they should happen to eat together.

NOTE: many of the organized groups relate this sentence to a ritual of theirs known variously as "communion," "the Lord's supper," or "eucharist." That Jesus intended not a ritual but a meal can

be found by studying 1 Corinthians 11, where Paulus clearly applies Jesus' statements to a common meal. Also, of the four accounts, Lukas is the only one who includes a "do this" statement; the others were not forgetting an important ritual but omitting it since they were already aware that loving one another was the lifestyle to which they had been called. In fact, Johannes was careful to include the evening's conversation, the chief topic of which was loving one another. Furthermore, there is nowhere in the NT any mention of a Christian ritual, but often we read of them "breaking bread" (sharing a meal) together.

Jesus also related the wine to the new covenant, possibly because it was red like blood. At any rate, the beverage was related by Jesus to the spiritual covenant to which his students had been called: the covenant of trust and love -- of internal principles instead of external laws.

At about this point, Judah left the meal to arrange Jesus' betrayal (Jn 13:30), and after further discussion about love (Jn 14-17), at the end of the Seder, the celebrants sang the Hallel (Mt 26:30) and prepared to leave.

24 *Now also, it happened that there was an argument among them about which of them was thought to be greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the nations are their lords, and the ones who exercise authority over them are called Benefactors. But it is not this way with you. On the contrary, the greatest among you should become as the youngest, and the governor should become like the one who serves.*

Sometime during the discussion about Jesus' departure and love -- perhaps near the beginning of it -- some of his students begin discussing what rank or position they would have after Jesus' death. A similar discussion has already taken place (Mt 20:20-8), but Jesus had not quite made his point that all of his followers were equal to one another.

The gentile kings are "lords." The Greek term, κυριεῖν, signifies the role of any sort of superior -- even if one were only *perceived* as superior. And those with "authority" over the nations were called Benefactors. The term here is ἐξουσιάζω, a word that signifies the ability to make decisions on behalf of others. The gentile nations are so used to such things that they use the title "Benefactor" for some of their superiors, as though positional authority were a good thing.

But among Jesus' followers, **no one** is empowered with any rank, position, or authority over any other. For "it is not this way with you." Instead, one becomes truly great (in a spiritual sense) not by occupying a superior position or by making decisions for others but by taking the lowest possible position -- that of the youngest. That is, in Christian relationships to one another, everyone should act as though everyone else were superior, for in reality all are equal and should be loved. Instead of seeking to be like a "governor" -- a decision maker, Jesus' followers must be like those who serve -- and have no ability even to make their own decisions.

"For who is greater--the one who reclines or the one who serves? Isn't it the one who reclines? But I am among you as the one who serves. Now you are the ones who have continued with me in my trials. And I am covenanting with you, just as my Father has covenanted a kingdom for me, so that you may dine and drink at my table in my kingdom and may sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

People only *think* that it is superior to be a "clergyman"; among God's people there can be no such thing. The greater person is actually the servant, since serving one another demonstrates the love that Jesus has been talking about. Jesus himself was "among you as the one who serves," and in fact he has just demonstrated his service by analogy in washing their feet.

So long as Jesus' students never place themselves over others and never make decisions for others, he covenanted with them that they would be enthroned in the kingdom. His students would not "judge the tribes" in the sense of a robed figure passing judgment, but their love for one another is a testimony -- a point of judgment for those who did not practice love in this life.

31 *"Simon, Simon, look! The Enemy has asked a favor--to sift you like wheat. But I begged about you, so that your trust wouldn't fail. And when you have turned out, commit your brothers." But he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you even to jail and to death!" But he said, "I am telling you, Peter, a rooster will not sound today until three times you deny that you know me."*

Lukas indicates with more detail than Matthaiah's account that Jesus actually predicted Peter's denials on the way out of the building, as they were leaving to go to the Mountain of Olive Trees. Matthaiah's non-chronological account makes it appear that Jesus did not say these things until they had reached the mountain (Mt 26:30ff.), but with the additional detail below about the swords, it is clear that they had left their rented room and were gathering their belongings.

Jesus' prediction was, generally speaking, that they would all be scattered like sheep (Mt 26:31f.). When Peter refused to accept that prediction, Jesus said more particularly of him that the Enemy wanted him to suffer and lose trust. But Jesus begged to God for Peter's trust. Although he would deny Jesus three times, Peter's trust would remain, and he would become a strong example to the others.

Still, Peter refused to accept a denial, offering even to die with Jesus. Jesus was insistent: Peter would deny Jesus three times before the middle watch. The term "rooster crow" was used to signify a watch trumpet. Before the third watch trumpet sounded, Peter would deny being Jesus' student -- three times.

And he said to them, "When I sent you out without a pouch or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" Now they said, "Nothing." Now he said to them, "But now, the one who has a pouch should bring it, similarly bring a bag, and the one who doesn't have a sword should sell his cloak and purchase one. For I am telling you that it is necessary for this thing that was written to be completed in me: "and he was considered to be with lawless people." For also, the thing about me has a completion."

Jesus was not literally telling his students to arm themselves permanently or to carry bags and pouches. Instead, he wanted to convey that the most Torah-abiding of all was about to be convicted as a lawbreaker, and they would be guilty by association. Therefore, their fortunes were about to shift, with all of the negative attention that had focused on him passing to them after his death. This had been predicted by Isaiah (53:12).

Now they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." Now he said to them, "It is enough."

His students interpreted his saying literally, and two of them picked up swords, intending to use them. Jesus indicated "it is enough," because they would not actually be called to fight, although now they would have the appearance of being able to do so.

LIV

39 *And after exiting, he went according to custom to the mountain of the Olive Trees. Now his students were also following him. Now when it happened that he was at the place, he said to them, "Pray not to enter into trial." And he withdrew from them (about a stone's throw away), and he placed his knees on the ground, and he prayed, saying, "Father, if you plan it, take this cup away from me. However, do not let what I want but what you want happen."*

By now it is the late evening, as Jesus' thoughts again turned to the plight of his students after his departure. He walked into a nearby garden with Peter, Jacob, and Johannes (according to Matthaiah), and he began to pray. Later additions to the original text add mysticism to the account.

Jesus knew that God could accomplish his plan without Jesus offering himself up to be murdered, and with the time of his death so near, he became anxious. Yet even in his deepest anxiety, he recognized that God's greater plan ought to take precedence over even his own life.

And he got up from praying, and came to the students, and he found them sleeping from sorrow. And he said to them, "Why are you napping? Get up and pray, so that you might not enter into trial."

Again, Lukas shortens the event. This time, Jesus' students had had trouble staying awake because he had been praying with them for several hours, until about midnight. He urged them to keep praying, which not only prepared them for what they were about to go through but also (coincidentally?) gave time to Judah to gather troops from the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus.

While he was still speaking, look, there was a crowd. And the one who is called Judah (one of the Twelve) was coming in front of them. And he came near Jesus and kissed him. But Jesus said to him, "Judah, Are you delivering over the Son of Man by a kiss?"

The term "kiss" indicates a stronger than normal kiss -- an affectionate kiss rather than a simple greeting. This was noticeable as a signal to those who were gathering around to arrest Jesus. As they saw the signal over, Jesus remarked about the irony of betraying the Messiah with a sign of love.

But those who were around him, noticing what was going to be, said, "Lord, should we strike with swords?" And one of them struck the high priest's slave and severed his right ear. But Jesus answered, saying, "You should stop at this point." And he touched the ear and healed him.

According to Johannes, it was Peter himself who struck the first blow, leaping to Jesus' defense. The servant, Malchus, lay bleeding as Jesus admonished his students that anyone who lives by the sword dies by the sword. He demanded that his students not fight, and he healed the servant.

Now Jesus said to the high priests and captains of the temple and old people who had happened upon him, "You have come out with swords and clubs as though after a robber. By day, when I was with you in the temple courts, you didn't stretch out your hands at me. But this is your hour and the authority of darkness." Now they seized him and led him off and brought him into the High Priest's house.

Directing his attention to his capturers, Jesus noticed that they had had the opportunity all week long to capture him, but then again, it was more appropriate for them to wait until midnight to do so. Matthaiah notes that the others all ran away at this point, although some of them remained nearby. Jesus was arrested and taken to Annas, who had been the High Priest and who was the father-in-law to the current High Priest, Kaiaphas. Annas still had considerable political influence.

54 *But Peter was following from a large distance. Now they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard, and they sat down together, and Peter sat in their midst. Now a certain female servant noticed him sitting down in the direction of the light, and she stared at him, and said, "This one was with him also." But he denied it, saying, "I don't know him, woman."*

Johannes' account points out that he too was following Jesus. Yet Johannes' social stature allowed him to enter the meeting, while Peter remained outside, watching through a window. A servant girl -- by no means anyone of great authority among the religious leaders -- noticed Peter and remarked that she had seen Peter with Jesus. For the first time, Peter denied it.

Meanwhile, according to Matthaiah and Johannes, Jesus was being subjected to a parade of false witnesses, who were trying to convict him of making threats to destroy the temple. They then led Jesus to Kaiaphas himself (Jn 18:24), and Peter continued to follow.

And after a short time, another noticed him and said, "You are also among them." But Peter said, "Person, I am not." And when about an hour had intervened, a certain other one forcefully asserted, saying, "In truth, this one was also with him. For he is even a Galilaian!" But Peter said, "Person, I don't know what you're saying!" And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster sounded.

Peter's denial this second time was more emphatic. Later on, a third person -- one who had seen him with Jesus in the garden (Jn 18:26) -- recognized Peter's Galilaian accent and realized who he was. Even more strongly, Peter uttered oaths and denied knowing Jesus. At that point, the watch trumpet sounded. This was, perhaps, a trumpet at about 4 AM.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter was reminded of the Lord's declaration, as he had said to him, "Before a rooster sounds today, you will deny me three times." And he went outside and cried bitterly.

The watch trumpets were loud enough to be heard by all, and Jesus who was inside made a point of glancing at Peter when the trumpet blared. Peter left the courtyard and began to cry, realizing that Jesus had been right. Yet Peter would not be "sifted like wheat." Instead, he would never deny Jesus again.

63 *And the men who were holding him mocked and whipped him. And they blindfolded him and asked him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one that is striking you?" And they said much other evil talk to him.*

By this point, it was nearer to dawn. The religious leaders were holding Jesus at this point until they would be able to hand him over to the Governor, Pontius Pilatus, to be convicted with false testimony. At their leisure, some of the soldiers began to mock and beat Jesus. Blindfolding him, they dared him to divine for them who was striking him -- as though prophecy would allow him to discern such things. They made fun of his Messianic claims.

66 *And as day happened, the group of the people's older ones came together, both the high priests and scribes, and they led him up into their Sanhedrin, saying, "If you are the Anointed One, tell us." Now he said, "If I tell you, by no means will you believe. But if I ask, by no means will you answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be sitting at the right side of God's power."*

At about dawn, the religious leaders convened a formal council meeting, demanding to know whether or not Jesus claimed to be the Anointed One. Jesus was defiant, saying that there was no point in answering their question. Even if they did believe, they wouldn't admit it, and he was convinced that they would not. Therefore, since he was not about to lie, he refused to respond. However, for those who were able to hear it, he predicted that although they would kill him, he was about to join God. Being "at the right side of God's power" was symbolic of being God's most trusted servant.

But all said, "Then you are God's son?" Now he said to them, "You are saying that I am." Now they said, "What testimony do we still have need of? For we ourselves have heard it from his mouth!"

At that comment, they tried again to get Jesus to admit to being the Messiah. Instead, he took their silent acknowledgement of what he had said as an admission that they knew who he was. Therefore, they themselves were claiming that he was the Anointed One. This was enough for them; it was as though Jesus were admitting it. Unable to support a capital case by merely claiming that Jesus was going to destroy the temple, now they would claim that Jesus was asserting himself as a king. That would be a threat to Roman rule.

23:1 *And all the crowd of them got up and led him to Pilatus. Now they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this one turning aside our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar. And he was saying that he himself is an anointed king."*

Jesus had already acknowledged that it was acceptable to pay tribute, but in order to make their claim stronger that Jesus was starting a rebellion against Rome, they portrayed him as a nationalistic would-be king.

But Pilatus asked him, saying, "Are you the King of the Jews?" But he answered him, saying, "You are saying that." Now Pilatus said to the high priests and the crowds, "I find no fault in this person." But they were insistent, saying, "He is stirring up the people, teaching in the whole of Judea, beginning even from Galilaiah to here."

Yet Pilatus was smart enough to realize that Jesus was not making any public claim to kingship as he knew it. Jesus was no threat. Johannes' account notes that Pilatus had more of a conversation with Jesus, even coming to believe that whatever Jesus was, it was exactly what Jesus claimed to be.

Now when Pilatus heard, he asked if the person was a Galilaian, and when he recognized that he was from the authority of Herod, he sent him up to Herod, since he was also in Jerusalem in those days.

Johannes also points out that Pilatus saw no reason to impose a harsh penalty on Jesus, such as the religious leaders were calling for him to do. He sent Jesus to Herod as a political ploy, knowing that Herod had heard of Jesus and had wanted to see him, and probably also believing that Herod would confirm that Jesus was not a political threat to Roman rule.

Now when Herod saw Jesus, he rejoiced greatly. For he had been wanting for a considerable time to see him, on account of his having heard about him. And he was hoping to see some sign done by him. Now he asked him things with a considerable number of words, but he answered him nothing. Now the high priests and the scribes stood up and accused him vehemently. Now also, Herod (with his soldiers) despised him. And after mocking him, they tossed a luxurious robe around him and sent him back to Pilatus.

Herod might have released Jesus, for he was certainly favorably disposed toward him. But Jesus was entirely uncooperative, refusing to perform any miracles and not even bothering to speak. As the Jewish leaders accused him, Jesus did not reply. Herod became aggravated with Jesus, and after his soldiers placed an ignoble plant (acanthus) on his head -- as though it were a laurel wreath, and after they put a colored robe on him, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilatus, making no particular recommendation.

Now Herod and Pilatus became friends with one another on that day. For they had formerly been in enmity toward one another.

Even though Jesus had refused to cooperate with Herod, Herod appreciated Pilatus' gesture in turning Jesus over to him. At that point, the two became allies.

13 *Now Pilatus called together the high priests and the rulers and the people, and he said to them, "You have brought this person to me as one who perverts the people. And look, after examining him in your presence, I have found in this person no fault like you are accusing him of. But neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. And look, nothing worthy of death has been practiced by him. Therefore, after chastising him, I will release him."*

It was a custom among the Jewish people that the Roman governor would pardon one offender at the time of the Passover. Pilatus saw this as a good time to exercise his prerogative and release Jesus, whom by now he was convinced was innocent. Not only had he been unable to accuse Jesus of any sedition, but also Herod found nothing wrong with him either.

Still, because the Jewish leaders were so angry, he ordered Jesus beaten and brought him out to be released.

But all together they cried out, saying, "Take this one away! Now release Bar-Abbas to us." (Bar-Abbas had been thrown in jail on account of a certain revolution that had happened in the city, and on account of a murder.)

The religious leaders refused to receive Jesus and stirred up the crowds that were gathering, so that the people would demand that Bar-Abbas be released instead of Jesus. Bar-Abbas was an anarchist and a murderer. Taking the four accounts together, it is probable that Bar-Abbas had looted homes and murdered homeowners during a revolution. Yet the people were asking to have him back -- instead of Jesus.

But Pilatus again addressed them, since he wanted to release Jesus. But they sounded out, saying, "Crucify! Crucify him!" Now he told them the third time, "For what bad thing that this one has done? I have found no fault worthy of death in him. Therefore, after chastising him, I will release him."

Again, Pilatus pleaded with them to release Jesus, but the crowd took his blood upon them as their own responsibility. Again recognizing that Jesus had done nothing wrong, Pilatus wanted to have him beaten again and freed. By this time, the crowds were close to shouting, and the group was becoming a mob.

But they were pressing him with loud voices, asking that he be crucified. And their soundings prevailed, and Pilatus judged to have their request be done. Now he released the one they were asking for, who had been thrown in jail on account of revolution and murder, and delivered up Jesus to their wishes.

It was late morning now, Friday 14 Nisan, and Pilatus realized that he appeared to have a rebellion on his hands. What did it matter to him in the long run if he ordered one Jew to be crucified? And so, Bar-Abbas was released, and Jesus was sent with Bar-Abbas' conspirators -- two thieves -- to the place of crucifixion.

LVI

26 *And as they led him away, they laid hands on a certain Kurenian, Simon, who came from the field, and they placed the cross on him to carry after Jesus. Now a great crowd of the people (and of those women who were lamenting and moaning about him) was following him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry over me. However, do cry over yourselves and over your children. Because look, days are coming during which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not given birth and the breasts which have*

never nursed.' Then they will begin "to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" Because if these things are done while the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Some traditions claim that Jesus stumbled and fell three times, but none of the accounts of Jesus' life indicate this. After the scourging that he had received, Jesus was deemed too weak to carry the heavy crossbar, and so another man was forced to carry it through the streets for him.

As people along the streets mourned for Jesus, his own focus was not on his impending fate but on the future. As he was led from Pontius Pilatus to the place where he would be crucified, Jesus turned the crowds to the coming judgment. Jesus quoted Hosea 10:8, a passage that concerned judgment. Vv. 3-10 in Hosea deal with a judgment on Israel for having chosen a king. Their king would be destroyed (v.3), and yet they still would not return to Yahweh. Similarly, the Jewish people of Jesus' time had their clergy, and as with the king, their clergy system was a rejection of God's rule (see 1 Sam 8:7). In destroying the temple, God was about to take away their religious system, and still people would not turn to God. Knowing their attitudes, God would make the judgment (i.e., the Revolt) particularly harsh.

"If these things are done..." refers to Jesus' crucifixion. If the just are captured and punished while the Messiah is present, the crowd should realize that the judgment on the unjust in Israel will be far worse after the Messiah has gone.

Now also, others, two wrongdoers, were led with him to be put to death.

These were two thieves, the companions of Bar-Abbas.

LVII

33 *And when they came to the place which is called Skull, they crucified him there, along with the wrongdoers, one indeed at his right and one at his left. "Now after they divided his garments," "they cast lots." And the people stood there, watching. Now also, the rulers were mocking, saying, "He saved others. He should save himself, if he is the Anointed, God's chosen one!" Now the soldiers were also mocking him, coming near, carrying vinegar to him, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"*

At the place called "Skull" -- in Aramaic, "Golgotha" -- Jesus and the others were crucified. There were several different kinds of crucifixions in those days, but crucifixion on the type of cross that we often see in church buildings and on necklaces was not in use yet. The most common sort of cross in use was called the "Tau Cross," named after the Greek letter *tau* because its form resembled one. The *tau* looked like our English letter "T". Its form was simple: a cross bar to hold the arms apart and a vertical bar or pole against which the body rested and which held the feet.

Jesus feet and ankles were nailed to the tau cross, and his hands were also probably bound by ropes -- holding him to the cross in case his hands ripped free. His outer garments would have been stripped away, leaving him either in an undergarment ("naked") or completely nude.

Crucifixion was a slow death, sometimes lasting for days as the criminals struggled to breathe properly.

The time was now about noon (see v. 44, below). Both Matthaiah and Johannes agree with the use of "the sixth hour" (noon), but most manuscripts of Markus' account appear to differ. With Markus, it is likely that a Greek *digamma* was used for the number "6". Since the letter was rapidly being "phased out," a copyist mistook the digamma, which looks like an "F," for a gamma, which looks like this: Γ. Gamma represents the number 3, and so most manuscripts of Markus' account read "the third hour."

The quotations, which are more detailed in Matthaiah's version, come from Psalm 22, which was a prediction about the crucifixion of God's Anointed One. Everything in that psalm was beginning to unfold around Jesus. The quotations come from v. 18.

People normally stood around offering something to drink (gall, must, wine, or vinegar) to crucifixion victims. For some this was merciful, but depending on what they offered, the drink might mock the person being crucified.

Quite a few of those who stood around Jesus mocked him, although Johannes reports that he and several women -- including Jesus' mother, Miriam -- were present as well, mourning. The soldiers guarded the crosses to be sure that no one intervened to free the criminals. The two thieves, some of the crowd, and the soldiers mocked Jesus, asserting that if indeed he were the Anointed One, God would have given him the power to escape. Matthaiah's account mentions that some of the religious leaders were present to mock him.

Now also, there was an inscription over him: "This one is the King of the Jews."

The inscription had been written at the direction of Pilatus in several languages: Latin; Greek; and Aramaic, apparently with slightly different wording. Seemingly, the Latin wording was "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," for the Latin inscription passed down through the Roman church. In abbreviated form, it appears as "INRI" on top of crucifixes that depict the image of Jesus. According to Johannes, Pontius Pilatus had deliberately used wording stating that Jesus *was* the King of Jews rather than that he had *claimed* to be the Messiah.

Now one of the wrongdoers who were hanging there spoke evil of him, saying, "Aren't you the Anointed One? Save yourself...and us!" But the other one answered, censuring him by saying, "Don't you fear God? Because you are under the same sentence, and indeed we were sentenced justly. For we are receiving what is worthy of what we practiced, but this one has practiced nothing out of place."

As some time passed, one of the two thieves became reluctant to ridicule Jesus. Perhaps noticing all of the people who loved him, and having heard about him, this thief realized that indeed Jesus had not done anything wrong.

And he said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Indeed I am telling you, today you will be with me in Paradise." And it was already about the sixth hour, and darkness happened to the whole land until the ninth hour, with the sun failing.

The repentant thief asked for Jesus to "remember me." That is, he hoped that Jesus would speak to God on his behalf, so that he too might enter the afterlife. Jesus' assurance was that the thief's own faith in Jesus' identity was enough: the thief would be with him that day. "Paradise" was an often used metaphor for the afterlife.

Now it is that Lukas provides the time. It was still about noon, but the sky immediately darkened. Matthaiah's account makes note of Jesus' shout, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me," which took place at about the ninth hour (3 PM). That shout was the first line of Psalm 22, pointing out to the people that it was being fulfilled. The psalm also indicates that even though its author felt abandoned, God did not abandon him. So it was with Jesus.

Now the curtain of the temple was divided down the middle. And Jesus, sounding out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Now after saying this, he expired. Now when the centurion noticed what happened, he glorified God, saying, "Surely, this person was just." And all the crowds who had happened by together to see this sight watched what had happened and returned, pounding their chests. Now all those who knew him and those women who had followed along with him from Galilaiah, stood at a large distance, seeing these things.

Johannes, who was standing nearby, also heard Jesus say that everything had been completed. With God's message now delivered, Jesus was ready to leave the earth to be with God. The fact that his voice was still loud may have been an indicator that Jesus' was still physically strong. He did not die, then, at whatever time he lost all energy, but at the time of his choosing. The Passover lambs were to be sacrificed at the day and time when Jesus died.

Even Jesus' last statement was a quotation from the Hebrew Bible. Psalm 31 is a psalm of praise to God, praise in the face of distress and idol-worshipping enemies (vv. 6, 11). But the author commits himself to God (v. 5), knowing that God has redeemed him -- that God is his refuge, his fortress (vv. 1, 3). And so Jesus died not in weakness but with the strength of trust that God had given him.

It is noteworthy that it is not one of the Jewish religious leaders who recognized that Jesus had been a just (innocent) man. Instead, it was a Roman centurion. As everyone gathered around, with the curtain of the temple tearing (a sign of the coming judgment), Jesus' followers welled up with emotion, staggering off grief-stricken.

LVIII

50 *And look, a man named Yosef, who was a Council member and a good and just man. (This one had not consented to their plan and practice). He was from Aramathaea, a city of the Judeans; he was expecting God's kingdom. This one came to Pilatus and asked for Jesus' body. And he took it down and wrapped it in linen and placed it in a tomb in a cave, in which no one had ever been laid. And it was the Day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was approaching.*

Although Yosef from Aramaathaea was a member of the same council that plotted Jesus' death, he had been a dissenter. Lukas' wording presents Yosef as being as strong a student of Jesus as any of the others with whom his readers are familiar. This Yosef asked Pilatus for the permission to bury Jesus' body, and that permission was granted. Yosef was wealthy, able to afford a burial cave which was new; no members of his family already lay within.

Since it was both the day prior to Pesach and late Friday afternoon, Yosef and others had to act quickly in order to bury Jesus properly before the Sabbath began. Johannes indicates that the two thieves had their legs broken, making sure they would not be able to prop themselves up to breath properly. That way, the whole process would be over before the Sabbath began at sundown.

Now the women who were the ones that had come with him from Galilaiah, were following after them. They observed the tomb and how his body was placed. Now they returned and prepared fragrances and ointments. And indeed they rested on the Sabbath according to the precept.

Some of the women who followed Jesus wanted anointed his body for burial, and the other accounts note that a stone was placed over the tomb and a guard set at its opening, so that none of Jesus' followers would be able to steal his body away. Lukas also notes that the women went home and rested on the Sabbath, after preparing the ointments which would be used after the Sabbath had passed.

LIX

24:1 *Now on the first day of the week, at early morning, they came to the tomb, carrying what fragrances they had prepared. Now they found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. Now after entering, they did not find the Lord Jesus' body. And while they were in doubt about this, it happened that, look, two men were standing with them in radiant clothing.*

This was early Sunday morning. We do not know actually when Jesus resurrected, for it could have happened anytime between sundown Saturday night and a few seconds prior to the arrival of Jesus' female followers. But we know that it was just before dawn when the women arrived.

They arrived with the spices to anoint the body of Jesus, but until they got there, they did not know how they would get past the heavy stone into the tomb (Mk 16:3). When they neared the place, they saw that the guard was gone and that the stone had been moved away. Once again, Lukas' account shortens what he had read in his sources, not naming the women until later.

Now they had become afraid, and as they bowed down their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living with the dead? He is not here. On the contrary, he has risen. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilaiah, saying that, 'It is necessary for the Son of Man to be delivered up into the hands of sinful people, and to be crucified, and to rise up on the third day.'"

The tomb was empty, but at the moment the women did not know whether Jesus' corpse had been removed by the Jewish leaders or the Romans, or whether he was gone for other reasons.

"The men" were divine messengers, and they informed the women that Jesus had risen from the dead. They also tried to remind the women of Jesus' prediction that he would be raised from the dead, but Johannes notes that Miriam of Magdala did not fully believe until later she encountered Jesus himself.

Lukas' account is consistent regarding the timeline. Jesus was to be raised from the dead "during the third day" after his death -- an expression that normally signified "the day after tomorrow." It was not only customary but also a matter of rabbinic practice that when counting days, any portion of a day was to be counted as a full day. Thus, Jesus had died on Friday afternoon before sunset; that was the first day. The second day was the Sabbath: Friday/Saturday. This was the third day, Saturday/Sunday -- the first day of the week.

And they remembered his declarations, and they returned from the tomb and related all these things to the Eleven, and to all the rest. Now they were the Magdalene Miriam, and Yoanna, and Miriam the mother of Jacob, and those who were left with them. They said these things to the envoys, and these declarations sounded in their presence like a fabrication, and they did not trust them.

The women now are named, for despite the Jewish practice of not allowing women to be legal witnesses to an event, Jesus had taught that everyone was equal. Consequently, Lukas names them as witnesses to the empty tomb. However, the Eleven did not believe and needed to see for themselves what had happened.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. And when he stooped down, he saw only the linen cloths, and he went away by himself, wondering what had happened.

Johannes' account notes that he himself had arrived there before Peter but had not gone into the tomb -- presumably so as not to defile himself during the feast. This made Peter the first one to enter the empty tomb. Even seeing this, it was difficult for Peter to believe, and Johannes notes that the Eleven all went home.

13 *And look, on the same day two of them were going into a village named Emmaus that was sixty stadia distant from Jerusalem. And they were conversing to one another about all these things that had transpired. And while they were conversing and seeking, it happened that Jesus himself neared and went with them. But their eyes were held so that they did not recognize him.*

Lukas now relates to his readers an account not carried by the others and probably obtained from the two eyewitnesses themselves. Two of Jesus' students were walking along a road to Emmaus when they saw a figure approach them. This man was Jesus himself, and he traveled with them for a while, but they did not recognize him.

Most likely, this took place that afternoon -- after Miriam of Magdala had spoken with Jesus but before the students' evening meal.

Now he said to them, "What sayings are these that you are tossing about to one another as you walk? And they stood still, dejected. But one named Kleopas answered, saying to him, "Are you

the only traveler in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that happened in it during these days?" And he said to them, "What things?"

Jesus feigned ignorance, pretending not to know who Jesus was or about his crucifixion. What would his students say now that he was dead?

Now they said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, a man who happened to be a prophet who was powerful in deed and word, in the presence of God and all the people. And about how the high priests and our rulers delivered him over to a judgment of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel.

The two travelers were not quite clear about who Jesus was or about what was supposed to happen. They knew that he was "a prophet," but they did not speak of him as Anointed One, only indicating that they HOPED he was the Messiah. They did rightly assign blame for Jesus' death to the champions of the religious system. Some commentators call this a "gentile bias," but Lukas' account does not blame all Jewish people for Jesus' death; instead, the onus was rightly placed on those who preferred their religion to Jesus' spiritual Torah.

"And yet, with all these things, this is the third day passing since these things happened. But also, some women from among us astonished us: they happened upon the tomb early. And when they didn't find his body, they came to us saying that they had also seen a vision of messengers who say he is alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it that way, just as also the women had said. But they didn't find him."

It was still the first day of the week -- Sunday afternoon -- and it was still only "the third day" since the crucifixion. Some commentators attempt to add a few days in the tomb, but Lukas does indicate otherwise.

Jesus' traveling companions, unaware that Miriam the Magdalene had seen Jesus after they left Jerusalem, relate to him the things that had happened earlier that day. They were dejected, probably thinking that Jesus' body had been stolen. Instead of saying simply that messengers had announced that Jesus had been raised, their wording indicates their belief that the women had only seen "a vision" of messengers who **said** that Jesus had risen. The two people did not quite believe.

And he said to them, "You mindless people, who are also slow-hearted to trust in all that the prophets spoke. Wasn't it necessary for the Anointed One to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" And from Moses and from all the prophets, he began to explain the things about himself to them in all the writings.

When they finished their description, Jesus reacted by chastising them. After all that had happened, after the predictions, and signs, and fulfillment, these two were still reluctant to accept that Jesus was the Anointed One who had risen from the dead.

Therefore, Jesus began to explain from the Hebrew Bible how the Anointed One was supposed to suffer just as he had done. Now being reminded of the role of the Messiah, these two would at last believe.

And they neared the village where they were going, and he made like he was going further. And they pressed him, saying, "Stay with us, because it is approaching evening, and the daylight has already gone down." And he entered to stay with them.

By now the sun was setting, but it was not yet dusk. The three arrived at Emmaus, and Jesus stayed briefly to eat with the two.

And as he was reclining with them, it happened that he took a loaf, gave praise, and he broke it, and gave some to them. Now their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And it happened that he disappeared from them. And they said to one another, "Weren't our hearts aflame as he spoke to us in the road, as he explained the writings to us?"

As Jesus praised God and began the meal by breaking bread, they recognized him right away, but suddenly he disappeared. As they realized who he was, his words about the Messianic prophecies were more clearly understood. The men raced to return to Jerusalem to tell the others.

LX

33 *And they got up at the same hour and returned into Jerusalem, and they found the Eleven and those who were with them collected. The group was saying that, "The Lord is risen and has appeared to Simon." And the others related the things that had happened in the road, as he was made known to them during the breaking of the loaf.*

Johannes reports that ten of the Eleven had gathered that night -- the evening that followed the first day of the week -- behind closed doors because they feared the religious leaders. Kleopas -- who was probably Lukas' source -- and the other arrived and were allowed into their dinner. By this time, Jesus had also appeared to Simon Peter, but he had not been seen by any of the others.

The news from Kleopas was warmly received.

Now while they were saying these things, he was in their midst. And he said to them, "Peace to you." Now they were frightened, and they became afraid, thinking they were observing a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And for what reason are doubts arising in your hearts? See from my hands and my feet that I am he. Feel me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones, just as you are observing me to have. And after saying this, he showed them the hands and feet.

Suddenly, Jesus teleported into their midst; he did not knock and gain entry to the locked room through the door. As they were stunned by his sudden appearance, they thought he might be a disembodied spirit. But he relieved their doubts by allowing them to touch the nail marks in his hands and feet. They were still astonished.

Now while they were still distrusting him from joy and wonder, he said to them, "Do you have something edible here?" Now they gave him part of a broiled fish. And, taking it, he ate it in their presence.

Since they were having trouble believing that Jesus was essentially just as he had been before and not some sort of apparition, he ate some of the dinner in their presence. And that was enough!

Now he said to them, "These are my sayings that I spoke to you while I was still with you: that it is necessary for all the things that are written in Moses' Torah and in the Prophets and in the Psalms about me to be fulfilled."

Following Johannes' chronology, Lukas portrays an explanation of his mission as taking place that evening. Possibly because Thomas was not with them (Jn 20:24), Jesus repeated these things later in Galilaiah, just as he had told them he would go ahead of them into Galilaiah. He also summarized the whole matter forty days later at the Mountain of Olive Trees. Lukas will collapse these events.

At this time, Jesus explained to everyone gathered what he had told Kleopas and his fellow-traveler: that it was necessary for the Messiah to go through all of the things that Jesus went through. Jesus separated the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms as he said these things because the third section of the Hebrew Bible -- the Writings -- had yet to be accepted with the same regard as the Torah and Prophets. Also, technically speaking, the Writings were still an "open" collection.

Then he opened their minds to understand the writings, and he said to them, "Thus it was written for the Anointed One to suffer and to be resurrected from among the dead on the third day, and for mental change to the point of forgiveness of sins to be heralded in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And look, I am sending my Father's promise upon you, but you are to remain connected with the city until you are empowered with power from on high."

Lukas brings together the resurrection appearances. At this time, he jumps ahead several days. Now we are outside Jerusalem at the Mountain of Olive Trees (Ac 1:12), and about 40 days have passed (Ac 1:3). Here, Jesus made his final restatement of the Great Commission (see also Mt 28:18-20). Here, we learn that the Anointed One was supposed to suffer. The Eleven were directed to be the Messiah's official representatives (heralds) to Jewish people of all nations. Their work was to begin at Jerusalem, to which they were instructed to return (also Ac 1:4, 12). They were to be legal witnesses of everything that they had seen and heard during the years while they were with Jesus.

Now he led them out until they were at Bethany, and he raised his hands and praised them. And during his praise of them, it happened that he was separated from them [and was carried up into heaven]. And they prostrated to him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they were continually in the temple courts praising God.

Together, they walked further away from Jerusalem, and Jesus gave a verbal praise, a "blessing," for his students. Then he suddenly disappeared. As they went back into Jerusalem to wait for the "power" promised to them, they had many things to discuss. Jesus had affected their lives so profoundly that from that point on they constantly praised God for having sent the Anointed One and for their own experiences with him.

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