

The Gospel of Luke - Volume 1

Light to My Path Bible
Notes (Luke 1-10)

F. Wayne MacLeod

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE (VOLUME 1)

*Light To My Path Bible
Notes (Luke 1-10)*

F. Wayne Mac Leod

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Copyright © 2025 F. Wayne MacLeod

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the author's written permission

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (r)), copyright (c) 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Used by permission. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Luke 1](#)

[Luke 2](#)

[Luke 4](#)

[Luke 3](#)

[Luke 4](#)

[Luke 5](#)

[Luke 6](#)

[Luke 7](#)

[Luke 8](#)

[Luke 9](#)

[Luke 10](#)

[About The Author](#)

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Luke is the longest of the gospel accounts on the life of Jesus Christ and details the events leading up to His birth to His resurrection appearances. The author writes anonymously but from the earliest traditions, it has been attributed to a man named Luke.

Luke was a traveling companion of the apostle Paul and physician by profession. Writing to the Colossians, the apostle Paul confirms this when he said:

14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. - Col 4:14

Feeling somewhat lonely in prison, the apostle Paul writes to Timothy:

10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. - 2Ti 4:10-11

Luke stood beside Paul even in his most difficult trials and a faithful friend and supporter.

Luke writes this account to an individual named Theophilus which means "beloved of God." There is some debate about the identity of this individual. Some focus on the meaning of the word and state that Luke writes to all believers who were "beloved of God." Others see this as an unknown individual for whom Luke writes the

account. Either way, the gospel is written under inspiration of God for all who will read it and take heed to its content.

Luke's introduction gives us some important details about the account he wrote.

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. - Lk 1:1-4

Observe several details here.

First, although Luke was not an eyewitness to the events that took place in the book, his writing was based on eyewitness accounts. We see this in Luke 1:2 which reads:

2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, - Luke 1:2

Second, Luke assures us that he researched every detail of this account closely and in an orderly fashion. Note his statement in verse 3:

3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you – Luke 1:3

Finally, observe why Luke compiled this information through careful and

ordered research from eyewitnesses:

4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. - Lk 1:1-4

It was Luke's passion to convey the absolute truth about Jesus so that those who read the account of his life would have certainty not only about the events but also about the Saviour. What follows then is a carefully researched account by a well-educated doctor from eyewitness accounts on the life of Jesus Christ, from His birth to His resurrection and ascension to the Father.

LUKE 1

Verse 1

The gospel begins with a purpose statement. Here in Luke 1:1-4 the author explains why he wrote the book. Note first that the idea of writing a record about the life of Jesus Christ was not unique to Luke. According to him, many people had “*undertaken to compile a narrative*” of the things that had taken place in those days. The life of Jesus and what He did and taught was so spectacular that people believed it needed to be recorded for posterity. While we are blessed to have such a record, we understand that it is of utmost importance that we be able to

have confidence in the accuracy of what was written. People write from different perspectives and not everyone has their facts straight. Imagine what the account would look like if it was written by one of Jesus' enemies or someone who did not understand His teaching. Not just anyone could write a true and accurate account of Jesus' life and teachings. The fact that many had undertaken to write such a narrative was part of Luke's motivation. He wanted people to know the truth and not just people's opinions.

Verse 2

Note Luke's sources for the facts about the life of Jesus here – "*Those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses.*" Luke spoke to those who had witnessed the events themselves and heard the words of Jesus.

Notice secondly that he received his information about the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus through “*ministers of the word.*” These ministers of the word were apostles and prophets who had proven themselves to be men of honour and integrity and whose reputations were without question. These ministers had seen the works of Jesus personally and heard Him teach.

Luke tells us that the source of his information about Jesus was men of absolute integrity who were with the Lord, heard His teaching and saw His miracles.

Verse 3

Note that Luke’s gospel was not quickly written. Luke carefully followed the life of Christ and His teaching “*for some time*” before committing it to writing.

Observe also the care Luke took in examining the facts of his narrative.

The Greek phrase used here is: "παρηκολουθηκοτι ανωθεν πασιν ακριβως," which can be translated as "following closely (side by side) from the beginning all (the whole) diligently (accurately)." The words used here show us how careful Luke was about the details he reported.

Next, it was Luke's passion to write an "*orderly account*." The word "orderly" is καθεξῆς (kathexēs) and refers to a series of events connected in a specific order. Luke's precision here is to be admired. He not only wants to get the events correct but sees it as important to get the order of these events right as well.

Finally, note that he mentions the name of Theophilus. The Greek word Θεόφιλος (Theóphilos) means "lover of God." There is much debate over the identity of this individual. Some note that Luke addresses him as "*most excellent Theophilus*" here. Such an

address was generally reserved for important officials. Consider the following examples in the Book of Acts:

(26) "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. – Acts 23:26 ESV

(2) And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, – Acts 24:2 ESV

(25) But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. – Acts 26:25 ESV

In each of these cases the phrase "*most excellent*" is used to refer to a government official of high ranking. It

is possible, therefore, that Luke wrote this account for an important official of that time.

Other commentators focus on the meaning of the name Theophilus (lover of God) and interpret it to be a general reference to believers.

Whether the account was written for a high official or all believers, we have it as an official and carefully researched narrative of the life of Jesus Christ.

Verse 4

Luke's goal in writing this book was that Theophilus would have a carefully researched and correct account of Jesus' life so that he could be certain of the things he had been taught.

Understand that stories about Jesus were likely circulating through the various communities of that day. It is quite possible that not all those stories were accurate. The New Testament

Scriptures were not compiled at that time. What Luke wrote was an official and authoritative account of proven events and teachings of Jesus that were beyond dispute. Theophilus could consult Luke's account if he wanted to confirm the accuracy of any event or teaching attributed to Jesus.

Verse 5

Luke begins his account of Jesus' life in the days of Herod, king of Judea. Herod was not a Jew, but a foreigner sent by Rome to govern the region of Judea. These were days of political turmoil with Rome asserting its authority over the Jews in that region.

At this time, Zechariah served as a priest. King David, according to 1 Chronicles 24, organized the priests of his day into divisions with a schedule and duty assigned to each. Zechariah was in the division of Abijah. His wife

was Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron the High Priest.

Verse 6

Luke tells us two things about Zechariah and Elizabeth, his wife.

First, they were righteous before God. The Greek word δίκαιος (díkaios) speaks about a person who conforms to rules and regulations and is in good standing with God.

Luke explains this in his second statement about them when he says that they “*walked blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.*” Zechariah and Elizabeth lived faithfully according to the Jewish laws and were devoted to God and committed to walking in His ways.

Verse 7

We learn that Zechariah and Elizabeth were “*advanced in years*” but had never had a child. The reason for this was that Elizabeth was barren. For some reason, she had never been able to conceive.

Not being able to have a child would have been a burden for this couple. It was important in those days for a wife to bear a child and carry on the family line. From a human perspective, now, however, the chance of this happening is quite remote.

Verse 8

Luke takes us to a particular time in Zechariah’s life here. His priestly division was scheduled for duty at the temple, and he was serving in that capacity that day.

Verse 9

In those days it was the custom to assign the priest's responsibilities by casting lots. When the disciples wanted to replace Judas, they did so by casting lots:

(24) And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen (25) to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." (26) And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. – Acts 1:24-26 ESV

When Joshua divided the land of Israel among the various tribes, he cast lots to determine which tribe would inherit each section of land:

(8) So the men arose and went, and Joshua charged those who

went to write the description of the land, saying, "Go up and down in the land and write a description and return to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." (9) So the men went and passed up and down in the land and wrote in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions. Then they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh (10), and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. And there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion. – Joshua 18:8-10 ESV

It was the understanding that those who cast lots were leaving the decision to the Lord:

*(33) The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.
– Proverbs 16:33 ESV*

In the mind of Zechariah, when the lot was cast for him to burn incense, he was doing so in the purpose and will of God.

Verse 10

Incense in the Bible is often a symbol of prayer.

(2) Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! – Psalms 141:2 ESV

(3) And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, (4) and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before

*God from the hand of the angel. –
Revelation 8:3-4 ESV*

Luke tells us that as Zechariah burned incense before the Lord, worshippers gathered in the temple courtyard to pray. The symbol was accompanied by the reality. Prayers rose to God with the incense in the courtyard that day.

Verse 11

As Zechariah burned incense, he noticed a figure standing at the right side of the altar. This would have taken him by surprise, for no one would interrupt the sacred responsibility given to him that day. Nor could anyone approach that altar. Luke tells us, however, that the figure that presented himself to Zechariah was no human being, but an angel.

Verse 12

Note Zechariah's response to the presence of the angel at the right side of the altar of incense. Luke tells us that he was troubled. The word ταραῖσσω (taráissō) speaks of agitation or emotional disturbance. This disturbance quickly led to fear. The word fear is φόβος (phóbos) and speaks of terror, or deep reverence and respect.

Zechariah understood that he was in the presence of something greater than himself and pulled back in terror and respect, uncertain of what was going to happen.

Verse 13

Note Zechariah's response to the presence of the angel at the right side of the altar of incense. Luke tells us that he was troubled. The word ταραῖσσω (taráissō) speaks of agitation or emotional disturbance. This

disturbance quickly led to fear. The word fear is φόβος (phóbos) and speaks of terror, or deep reverence and respect.

Zechariah understood that he was in the presence of something greater than himself and pulled back in terror and respect, uncertain of what was going to happen.

Verse 14

The angel who appeared to Zechariah at the altar of incense shared with him two details about the birth of their son John.

First, their son would bring them joy and gladness. This would not only be because he was the answer to their prayer, but because of the life he would live. Remember that according to Luke 1:6, Zechariah and Elizabeth were *“righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments*

and statutes of the Lord.” This couple loved the Lord and their great passion in life was to serve and honour Him. We can only imagine what joy it would bring to them to watch their only son grow up to have that same passion. Second, the angel told Zechariah that the birth of his son would cause many people to rejoice. He went on to explain the reason for this in the next verse.

Verse 15

In verse fourteen, the angel told Zechariah that many would rejoice in the birth of their son John. He now shares the first reason for this rejoicing — “*He will be great before the Lord.*” God had a special purpose for their son John. He was born with a calling on his life. The angel told Zechariah something about that calling in verse 16.

Because John had a special calling, the angel told his father that he was not to drink wine or strong drink. This was a commitment John kept all his life. Consider what Jesus said about him in Luke 7:33:

(33) For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' – Luke 7:33 ESV

Many commentators see in this statement a reference to the fact that John may have been raised as a Nazirite. A Nazirite was an individual under a special vow of separation before God for a specific purpose. That vow required the individual to live a certain lifestyle. They were obliged to separate themselves from wine and strong drinks, from any grape juice or grapes in any form (Numbers 6:3,4). Nazirites were not to shave their heads or cut their hair until the time of their

vow was completed (Numbers 6:5). Finally, the individual under a Nazirite vow was not to go near a dead body but always remain pure before the Lord (Numbers 6:6-7).

Observe also that the angel told Zechariah that this child, John, would be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb. God's hand was upon this child even before he was born, filling him with His Holy Spirit and calling him to a particular role. His parents were to understand the importance of this role and raise him as a Nazirite, separated for the Lord and that purpose.

Verse 16

Zechariah and Elizabeth's son John, according to the angel, would "*turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.*" Note several details in these words here.

First, John would turn +----+ to their God. The idea here is that his ministry was one of some significance and he would reach a multitude of people.

Second, see that his role would be to the "*children of Israel.*" God called John to minister to his people, the Jews.

Finally, note that he would turn these Jews to "*the Lord their God.*" John would point his people to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would reveal the purpose of the God of Israel through His Son Jesus.

Verse 17

Finally, the angel told Zechariah that his son would go before the Messiah in the power of Elijah. This statement brings us back to the very last verse of the Old Testament which reads:

(5) "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and*

*awesome day of the LORD comes.
(6) And he will turn the hearts of
fathers to their children and the
hearts of children to their fathers,
lest I come and strike the land with
a decree of utter destruction. –
Malachi 4:5-6 ESV*

This passage was very familiar to the Jews of Zechariah's day. They understood that the promised Messiah would be preceded by a great prophet like Elijah, who would minister in the power of the Spirit and usher in the days of this promised Messiah.

What the angel was telling Zechariah was that his son would be the prophet foretold by Malachi. He would be anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do three things:

First, he would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. He would restore the basic foundational structures of society as the lives of

fathers and mothers were restored to their families.

Second, John would bring the disobedient under the wisdom of the just. The word just here is δίκαιος (díkaios) and refers to those who are righteous or conformed to the rules and regulations of society or, more particularly, of God. John's ministry would have an impact on those who wandered from God. He would see many repent of sin and disobedience and be restored to God.

Finally, John would prepare a people for the Lord God. This was the role Malachi prophesied. John would prepare people to receive the Messiah. He would call them to repent of their sin in preparation for His ministry among them.

Verse 18

The words of the angel were quite clear. Zechariah and Elizabeth were to have a male child who would be called and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth to carry out a vital ministry for the Lord God. The presence of the angel was a miraculous encounter that inspired fear in Zechariah. Note, however, that, even though Zechariah was "*righteous*" and walked "*blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord*" (verse 6), his human wisdom and understanding still stood in the way. He questioned the angel in the words: "*How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.*"

The word "*know*" does not express simply an intellectual understanding of the matter but the experience of it as well. In other words, Zechariah is not just saying, "*How can I understand what you are telling me is true?*" but also, "*How can I ever experience this*

reality in my life." He expresses his doubt about the truth of the angel's words by saying, "For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." In other words, we are too old to have a child. It is medically impossible.

Verse 19

The angel addresses Zechariah's doubt by identifying himself.

First, the angel tells Zechariah his name — "I am Gabriel." The name was known to Zechariah as a priest. In the book of Daniel, we read how this angel was sent to reveal the meaning of Daniel's vision to him:

(15) When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. (16) And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the

Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." – Daniel 8:15-16 ESV

The identity of this angel carried weight. He was an important angel of God. Zechariah had no reason to doubt his word.

Second, Gabriel told Zechariah that he stood in the presence of God. He stood before God as His servant in the very courtyards of heaven. He told Zechariah that he had just come from the presence of God to convey the message he had just given him.

Third, Gabriel reassured Zechariah that he was sent from God to bring him this news. The prophecy he spoke about this sonb was from God.

Verse 20

If the reassurances of verse nineteen were not enough for Zechariah, the

angel gave him a sign from God to confirm the truth of the promise made. Gabriel told Zechariah that he would not be able to speak until the day the promise was fulfilled. There is a double purpose for this sign.

First, the sign was intended to reassure Zechariah of the promise of God. God would be true to His word. Every day, Zechariah tried to communicate unsuccessfully with his voice; he was reminded of this promise of God for a son.

Second, the sign was intended as a rebuke. Note the words, "*because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.*" Zechariah's disbelief was addressed through his inability to speak for these months. He was given cause to reflect on how he did not trust the words of the angel from God. He was reminded of his worldly way of thinking and how he questioned the power of God to do the

impossible. How easy it is to measure God according to worldly standards.

Verse 21

While Zechariah was communicating with the angel, worshippers standing outside in the courtyard began to wonder why he was delayed in returning to them. Access to the holy place where the altar of incense was found was forbidden to the ordinary worshipper. They could not go into this part of the temple to check on him, so they stood outside, wondering what was taking him longer than usual to burn the incense.

Verse 22

The answer to their question about why Zechariah was delayed came when he finally appeared from the holy place and was unable to speak. All he could

do was make signs to those present. The worshippers assumed Zechariah had seen a vision from God while he was burning incense. They did not understand the nature of the vision but saw its impact on their priest.

Verse 23

Zechariah remained at the temple until his time of service had come to an end. Each priestly division had a specified time of service at the temple. They would remain there until that time was completed and they were relieved by the next scheduled division. When Zechariah's time was over, he returned to his home, where he met a very perplexed wife, confused by his inability to speak and share the encounter he had with the angel.

Verse 24

As promised, Elizabeth, in her old age, conceived and became pregnant. Note her response to this pregnancy — “For five months, she kept herself hidden.” The idea seems to be that she kept this matter to herself and avoided public appearances.

Elizabeth was an old lady at this time, and it would be quite exceptional to see a woman of this age in such a condition. It may be possible that Elizabeth was trying to avoid gossip that may have circulated in the community.

I wonder if part of Elizabeth’s desire to hide herself was to protect the child in her womb. Did she reduce her duties to care for this child and ensure his health?

While we can only guess as to the reason for hiding herself, we can be assured that both parents saw this pregnancy as a blessing from God in their old age.

Verse 25

While Elizabeth hid herself during the first five months of her pregnancy, we can be assured that it was not out of shame. Note what she says here.

First, see the phrase, "Thus the Lord has done for me." There was no question in Elizabeth's mind that the child in her womb was from God.

Second, note the words, "He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." If there was any shame for Elizabeth, it was in the fact that, prior to this time, she had not been able to bear a child. That shame and reproach was now removed. God had "looked on" her and removed that shame by giving her a son.

Verse 26

Verse 24 tells us that Elizabeth hid herself for five months. This was about

to change when the sixth month of her pregnancy arrived. The angel Gabriel, who announced to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would conceive (verse 19), returned with a second, very similar message, this time to a young virgin in Nazareth..

Verse 27

Gabriel was sent to a young virgin, engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. Note three important details here.

First, Mary was a virgin. prophecy
Consider this in light of the prophecy of Isaiah who said:

(14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14 ESV

This Old Testament prophecy predicted that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Mary fulfilled this qualification.

Second, note that Joseph was a descendant of David. It was the understanding of the people of Jesus' day that the Messiah would come from this line:

(42) Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" – John 7:42 ESV

Third, the angel Gabriel made this announcement in Galilee. Consider this in light of Isaiah's prophecy about Galilee here:

(1) But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and

the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. (2) The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. – Isaiah 9:1-2 ESV

Isaiah prophesied that the region of Galilee would see a great light. That light would be in the person of the prophesied Messiah.

It is not without reason, therefore, that Gabriel went to a virgin from the line of David who lived in Galilee. All of this was prophesied long before it took place. Gabriel is sent to announce that the prophecy was about to be fulfilled.

Verse 28

The angel Gabriel went to Nazareth in Galilee to a virgin who was engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of King David. Upon arrival, he greeted her, saying, "*Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!*"

Note first that the angel called Mary a favoured one. The word used here is χαριτόω (charitóō) and speaks about someone who is highly honoured. We can only imagine what a young girl from a simple family thought about this. To see an angel was an overwhelming experience. To hear an angel from God speak of you as being highly honoured would have been more than Mary could understand.

Note also the phrase, "*The Lord is with you.*" Now there was a general sense in which we all experience the presence of the Lord. This, however, is not what we are speaking about here. The presence of the Lord the angel spoke about was a special presence for a particular

purpose. Mary likely understood this when the angel spoke to her that day. God had, for some reason, singled her out for His purpose. We can only imagine how overwhelming these words must have been for this simple virgin of Nazareth.

The King James Version adds the phrase, "*Blessed art thou among women.*" These words are not found in every early Greek manuscript and, therefore, are omitted in some English translations. The words are nonetheless very true. Mary was blessed in a very special way and would have the privilege of being the chosen mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.

Verse 29

Note Mary's response to the presence and words of the angel Gabriel.

First, she was “*greatly troubled at the saying.*” While the presence of the angel would have disturbed Mary, it was the words and message he brought her that were the source of her agitation.

Second, Mary “*tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*” The word translated discern here is διαλογίζομαι (dialogízomai) and refers to considering or deliberating in one’s mind. The words the angel spoke were confusing to Mary. She did not know what he was speaking about or what he meant by calling her favoured. She began to reason in her mind what he might be speaking about and what God could have for her to do. She had no idea of God’s purpose at this moment.

Verse 30

Understanding Mary’s confusion, Gabriel clarifies his message. Note two

details in this verse.

First, see the words, "*Do not be afraid Mary.*" The angel Gabriel called Mary by her name. This may have taken her by surprise, for she had never met him before, nor did she likely know his name.

Second, note that Mary was afraid. She quite possibly understood Gabriel to be a heavenly being and being alone in his presence would have been frightening for her.

To calm these fears, the angel Gabriel explains the message he had come to bring. He begins by telling her that she has found favour with God. The word favour is χάρις (cháris) meaning grace. The opposite of grace is merit. Merit is a reward given to those who have earned it. Grace is given without consideration of merit. You cannot earn grace. It is given to the undeserving.

Mary likely lived a righteous life and loved the Lord, but so did many other girls in her country. It was not because she was better than other girls her age that she was chosen and favoured by God. She did not earn the right to be the mother of Jesus; she was given that favour because of the unexplainable and undeserved grace of God, who chose her above all other girls to be the mother of our Lord.

Verse 31

Gabriel explains to Mary the purpose of God for her life. He told her that she would conceive and bear a son. She was to call his name Jesus. The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew יהושוע (yehôšûa) meaning “the Lord delivers.” At this point, Mary likely did not fully understand the significance of that name.

Verse 32

Gabriel tells Mary three things about the child that would be born to her in this verse.

First, Mary's child would be "*great*." The word μέγας (mégas) can describe something great in size, value, importance, power, or dignity. Her son would surpass all other children in all these ways.

Second, Mary's Son would be called the "Son of the Most High." Understand that those who belong to the Lord Jesus are sons and daughters of God. This, however, is not what the angel is telling Mary. Jesus would be the Son of God. Joseph would not be Jesus' father. While a sexual relationship is needed for a woman to get pregnant, this is not what happened to Mary. In her case, God placed the child in her womb through extraordinary means without sacrificing Mary's virginity. God is the

Father of Jesus not because He created Him, but because He placed the pre-existing Jesus in Mary's womb to be born as a man in the line of David.

Third, Jesus would be given "*the throne of his father David*." Observe the phrase, "*his father David*." From a legal perspective, Jesus was born into a family that had a direct line to David. This was important in that the Messiah was prophesied to be from this line.

Note that Jesus would be given the "*throne of His father David*." We know that Jesus did not take this throne as the political king of Israel, ruling over a physical kingdom. Listen to what Jesus said about His kingdom when asked about it by Pilate in John 18:

(33) *So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"* (36) *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of*

this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” – John 18:33,36 ESV

The kingdom Jesus established was not a political kingdom but a heavenly and spiritual one. His kingdom is in the hearts of men and women who bow their knees in surrender to His Lordship in their lives.

Verse 33

Note what Gabriel had to say about the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, Mary’s son.

First, Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would reign over the house of Jacob. In Mary’s mind, the reference to the house of David would be to the Jewish people who were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Admittedly, the Jews

rejected Him as their king but that does not mean that He has given up on them. He is still their king, whether they recognize Him or not. Scripture seems to show that He has yet a work to do in them as His people.

We should also understand the words of Gabriel in light of what Paul said in Galatians 3:

(7) Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

(8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." (9) So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. – Galatians 3:7-9 ESV

The reign of Jesus over the house of Jacob is worldwide and not just of the

Jewish nation. As Paul said to the Galatians: "Those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham."

Finally, Gabriel told Mary that the reign of Jesus would be forever without end. No power on earth or hell would overcome this reign. Mary's son would vanquish sin, death, and the power of Satan. He will reign throughout all eternity.

We can only imagine how difficult these words would have been for Mary, as a young virgin, to understand. She would wonder at the great responsibility and honour that had been entrusted to her as a young girl.

Verse 34

Note Mary's response to Gabriel's message from God: "*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*" Understand here that Mary was engaged to be married and it would have been logical for her

to assume that the angel was speaking about after her marriage to Joseph when they had her first child. This does not seem to be Mary's thought process, however. Somehow, she understood that the words Gabriel brought were not going to be delayed and that she would become pregnant very soon. This perplexed her because she was unmarried and had never had a sexual relationship with a man and did not plan on doing so until she was married to Joseph in the future.

Verse 35

The angel Gabriel explains to Mary how she would conceive and become pregnant in the words: "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*"

Note first that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Throughout the Bible, we have records of how the Holy Spirit

would fall upon individuals to empower them in some way for service.

Ezekiel 11:5 shows us how the Spirit of the Lord fell on Ezekiel and gave him words to speak to the people:

(5) And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind. – Ezekiel 11:5 ESV

The Spirit fell upon Samson and gave him extraordinary strength to tear a lion to pieces:

(5) Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. (6) Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing

in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. – Judges 14:5-6 ESV

The prophet Samuel told Saul that when the Spirit of the Lord fell on him, he would change him into a new man:

(6) Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. – 1 Samuel 10:6 ESV

The Spirit of the Lord fell upon Cyrus of Persia and stirred him to proclaim freedom for the Israelites:

(22) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia,

*so that he made a proclamation
throughout all his kingdom and also
put it in writing: – 2 Chronicles
36:22 ESV*

This is what Mary is experiencing here. The Spirit of God fell upon her, and bypassing the normal means of pregnancy, planted the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ in her womb, anointing her to be the mother of our Lord.

Secondly, note the phrase: "*The power of the Most High will overshadow you.*" The Greek word ἐπισκιάζω (episkιάzō) means to cast a shadow over. The shadow here is the presence and power of God. Imagine an individual in the hot sun of the desert thirsty and overcome by the heat. There before this individual is a great tree with long stretching branches casting a shadow over the hot sand of the desert. Under this shade, the traveller finds rest and reprieve from the scorching and life-threatening

heat of the sun. There were difficult times for Mary ahead. The responsibility she was to carry could not be taken lightly. What a comfort it would be to know that God would overshadow her wherever she went. That shadow would protect and keep her as she carried this pregnancy through to the end.

Gabriel tells Mary that because this child was from God, he would be called holy. He had been set apart by God and for His purpose. He was no ordinary child. He was not conceived by ordinary means but miraculously through the work of the Holy Spirit and would be called the Son of God.

In those days it would have been much harder to understand what took place when Mary conceived and bore a child. In our day, doctors can implant an embryo into the womb of a mother by a medical intervention. It should not be difficult to understand how God, the

author of life, was fully able to do the same.

Verse 36

Gabriel had another important revelation for Mary that day. He told her that her relative Elizabeth, who had been unable to conceive all her life, had now conceived a son in her old age and was six months pregnant. This news would have been very surprising for Mary, but it would also have confirmed the miraculous power of God. In Elizabeth, Mary would have support and encouragement as together they carried a miraculous child in their wombs.

Verse 37

We must understand the phrase: "*For nothing will be impossible with God*" in the context of what the angel had just

revealed to Mary. Gabriel told her that she would conceive and bear a son. Mary did not understand how this could be since she had never had a sexual relationship with a man. The angel told her that Elizabeth, who had been barren all her life, was now pregnant in her old age. This proved the power of God to do the impossible. God could cause Elizabeth to become pregnant by normal means even when she was past the point of being fertile. God could also put a child in the womb of a virgin who had never had a sexual relationship with a man. Nothing was impossible for God.

Verse 38

Observe Mary's response to the message from God through Gabriel.

First, Mary declares: "*I am the servant of the Lord.*" This was not just a statement of fact but a commitment on

Mary's part to be His servant. She willingly surrenders to God as Her Lord and Master.

Second, Mary accepts the role God gave her in the words: "*Let it be to me according to your word.*" There was no discussion with Joseph here. She did not ask for time to consult her parents. This was a matter between her and God, and that day, she said "yes" to God and His purpose. She did not know the implications of that decision, but that was not her concern at present. God wanted her and she surrendered to Him and agreed to be His servant.

Having delivered his message and received Mary's response, Gabriel left her.

Verse 39

We are not told how long it was after receiving word from Gabriel that Mary left Nazareth to go to "*a town in*

Judah." We understand from verse forty that she went to see Elizabeth. Luke tells us here that Mary "*went with haste.*" She would have been anxious to see Elizabeth and have someone to talk to and identify with at this point in her life.

Verse 56 tells us that Mary would stay with Elizabeth for three months. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:36 that Elizabeth was six months pregnant. This means that Mary was present when Elizabeth was in her ninth month of pregnancy. Luke 1:56-57 infers that Mary left before Elizabeth gave birth to her son John. If this is the case, Mary must have left Nazareth at once after the angel spoke to her.

Verse 40

Mary left Nazareth "*with haste*" to see Elizabeth. We are not told if she communicated anything to her parents

or Joseph about the angel and his message. They were not the ones in whom she would confide and process this calling on her life. God provided her with a woman who was going through a similar situation. In Elizabeth, Mary would find an understanding ear. Elizabeth had also experienced a miraculous conception. I can only imagine the conversations that took place in those days as Mary and Elizabeth ate and worked together around the house.

Verse 41

Luke tells us that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, two things happened. First, the baby in her womb leapt. This was not normal. To understand what is happening here we need to see this event in light of what the angel told Elizabeth's husband Zechariah about this child:

(15) for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. – Luke 1:15 ESV

Elizabeth's son would be "*filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*" It was the Spirit of God in this child that leapt when He heard the sound of Mary's voice. The Spirit of God responded to the presence of the Saviour in Mary.

Second, Luke tells us that when the child leapt in her womb, Elizabeth was also filled with the Holy Spirit. This confirms what took place that day. As the Spirit of God moved in the child in her womb, He also welled up in Elizabeth his mother. She became very aware of the presence of God when Mary stepped into her house.

Verse 42

When Mary greeted her, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The idea here is that the Holy Spirit came upon her, and she became aware of His empowering. Notice what took place when the Spirit came upon Elizabeth. She “*exclaimed with a loud cry.*” The word used here is ἀναφωνέω (anaphōnéō) which comes from the word “aná,” which in this case refers to intensity, and “phōnéō,” meaning to cry out. In other words, Elizabeth cried out with intensity. Note the words she spoke with such intensity.

Empowered by the Spirit of God, Elizabeth declared Mary to be blessed among women. This blessing was the result of God having chosen her to be the instrument through which His Son would come into this world.

Elizabeth also declared, through the Spirit, that God the Father blessed the fruit of Mary’s womb. Understand that the blessing of God was on Elizabeth’s

child as well, Elizabeth recognizes, however, that the fruit of Mary's womb surpassed her child. The blessing Elizabeth speaks about here is not just upon the child but also the work He had come to do. The child in Mary's womb had a very special role to play and through Him, the whole world would be blessed.

Understand here that Elizabeth had no way of knowing about Mary's pregnancy at this point. Verse 41 infers that she made this declaration as soon as she heard Mary's greeting. The Spirit of God revealed these things to Elizabeth. His words would have been a further confirmation to Mary that God was in her pregnancy.

Verse 43

In verse 42 Elizabeth declared both Mary and the child in her womb to be blessed. Note here that not only does

the Spirit of God reveal to Elizabeth that Mary was pregnant, but He also reveals the identity of this child in her womb – He was Elizabeth's Lord.

Elizabeth is overwhelmed by the fact that God would grant her the privilege of welcoming the "*mother of her Lord*," into her home. Understand that the only way Elizabeth could have known this detail was because it was revealed to her by the Spirit of God who filled her.

We can only imagine how surprised Elizabeth would have been at this revelation of the Spirit and the privilege she had been given to take Mary into her home. Consider this for a moment.

We understand from Luke 1:19 that Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, met the angel Gabriel when he was offering the burnt offering before the Lord. Gabriel announced to him that his wife Elizabeth would have a child in her old age (Luke 1:13) and that this child

would “*make ready for the Lord a people prepared*” (Luke 1:17). This same angel spoke to Mary, announcing that she too would have a child (Luke 1:26). Zechariah understood perfectly what Mary had experienced when Gabriel appeared to her with his announcement. He would see in Mary the fulfillment of Gabriel’s words about his son.

Elizabeth experienced a miraculous pregnancy announced by the angel Gabriel. She understood what it was like to experience the kind of miracle Mary was experiencing in her body. There would be no question about how this pregnancy had taken place from this couple. They would understand Mary’s situation perfectly. Elizabeth and Zechariah were given the tremendous privilege of taking young Mary into their home and ministering to her with all her questions at this time. They understood what she was going

through like no one else, for they, too, were going through the very same thing. For the first three months of her pregnancy, Mary was supported and strengthened by this couple. We can only imagine how she also strengthened and encouraged Zechariah and Elizabeth as well.

Verse 44

Speaking to Mary, Elizabeth declared that when she heard the sound of her greeting, the baby in her womb leaped for joy. Notice two details here.

First, the sound of Mary's greeting caused Elizabeth's baby to leap in her womb. In Luke 1:15, the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his son would be filled with the Spirit "even from his mother's womb." The Spirit of God moved this child at the sound of Mary's voice and overflowed in Elizabeth,

announcing that Mary was pregnant with the Lord (see verses 41-43).

Second, see that the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy. Elizabeth knew this because that joy apparently overflowed into her. The Spirit of God filled her unborn child with this joy in the presence of the Saviour.

These events would have confirmed to Mary and Zechariah the words of the angel Gabriel about their child. They would also have confirmed that Mary's child was the one he was to introduce as the Messiah.

Verse 45

In Luke 1:42, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed that Mary was blessed among women because she had been chosen to be the mother of our Lord. Here, in verse forty-five, she once again blesses Mary, this time for a different reason. Elizabeth pronounced

a blessing on Mary because she believed that what the Lord told her through the angel would happen just as He said. Understand here that Gabriel's words defied logic and everything Mary understood about conception and pregnancy. Never had a virgin conceived without knowing a man. Mary, however, accepted what the angel told her and trusted that God was able to do what He promised. Her faith in God and His Word brought blessing.

Verse 46

When Mary arrived at the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared her to be the mother of our Lord. We can only imagine how overwhelming and encouraging this must have been for Mary. God confirmed what He had declared through the angel Gabriel in the words of Elizabeth. In the next ten verses, Mary responds as a young woman to the blessing of that first

encounter with Elizabeth and her Spirit-filled words.

Mary begins with the words, "*My soul magnifies the Lord.*" The word used here is μεγαλύνω (megalúnō) which means to make great or to praise. It is important to see these words of Mary in their context. God had given her the wonderful privilege of being the mother of our Lord. She had been chosen above all other women to know this blessing. I have met people who have known the hand of God in their lives, and they begin to think that there must be something in them that made God choose them above all other people. They become puffed up with pride and expect people to look up to them and see them as important. This is not Mary's response. Her first response was to magnify or enlarge the name of her God. She did not focus on herself. All she sees is the amazing grace of God

that would choose her. She praised Him. She gave Him the glory.

Verse 47

Not only does Mary magnify the name of the Lord (verse 46) but note that her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour. Understand that the responsibility before her was a serious one. Many people would not understand what had happened to her. Her testimony about the Spirit of God making her pregnant would have been blasphemous in their minds. Her pregnancy outside of marriage would have been a social taboo and contrary to the command of God. If Joseph was not the father, she would have been seen as unfaithful. Even Joseph would have struggled to understand or accept her explanation of how she became pregnant. These were difficult matters to address, yet the Lord God gave her joy.

A spirit that rejoices in God is a spirit that is in tune with Him and walking in His purpose. The fact that Mary experiences such joy shows that she had not been unfaithful or disobedient to the command of the Lord. The presence of God's joy filled her heart as she faced the struggles before her.

Verse 48

Note how Mary describes herself and her condition in the words, "*He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.*" The word translated "*humble estate*" is ταπείνωσις "*tapeínōsis*" and speaks of something lowly or vile. Mary has no sense of self-importance here. She was from a poor background and had nothing worthy of attention. She is amazed that the Lord God would consider her to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Note also that she describes herself as a servant. The word she uses here is δούλη (doúlē) which is a female bondservant bound to a master. Bondservants were of low social status. Mary sees herself at the bottom of the social ladder.

Despite her poor estate and servant status, Mary knew that generations to come would call her blessed. She believed that her Son would do great things and she would be honoured and blessed as his mother.

Verse 49

In contrast to her "*humble estate*" (verse 48), the Lord God was mighty. The word δυνατός (dunatós) speaks of one who is able and strong. This was a God to whom nothing was impossible. He could do everything He said He would. Nothing could stand against Him or hinder His purpose.

This mighty God, according to Mary, had done great things for her. The word translated as “*great things*” is μεγαλῆιος (megaleíos) and refers to miracles or to things that exceed the normal events of life. Mary was aware of God’s spectacular power and ability.

Note that the “*great things*” God did were, according to Mary, “*for me.*” She was aware of the hand of God upon her to accomplish miraculous wonders.

Not only was God a mighty God, but Mary describes Him also as holy. The word ἅγιος (hágios) refers to something that is set apart from this earth and its defilements. As a holy God, He is pure and separated from sin. Mary understood that everything God did was good, right, and pure.

Verse 50

In verse 49 Mary speaks of God as mighty and holy. These qualities

separate Him from us as human beings. We are limited in ability and sinful in nature. Note, however, that Mary adds another quality that opens His heart to us. She tells us here that God is also merciful.

The word ἔλεος (éleos) speaks of compassion, and pity that is moved to respond. While we may feel compassion or pity for someone and do nothing, mercy cannot remain inactive. It responds to the needs around it in acts of love and generosity.

Mary describes a God who is moved to respond to those who fear Him. The word φοβέω (phobéō) used in this sense carries the meaning of reverence and devotion. Mary is telling us that God's mercy is extended to those who revere and commit themselves to Him. Note that this mercy of God extends from one generation to another. The God whose mercy saved me from sin is the same God who will deal with my

children who wander from the path. The mercy of God was not just for Mary and her day, but for us as well. God does not change. He was and will always extend His merciful hand to those who love Him.

Verse 51

The God Mary describes here is a God of strength and might. Note, however, that He showed this strength to His people. The words, "*He has shown strength*," show us that Mary is not just quoting from a theological textbook. She knows these things to be true personally. She goes on to describe how God showed His strength.

God showed His strength by scattering the "*proud in the thoughts of their hearts*." God knew the thoughts of the proud, and though they puffed themselves up and achieved great power and authority, He scattered

them, and their efforts came to nothing.

Consider, for example, those who built the tower of Babel to make a name for themselves. God scattered them and their efforts amounted to nothing (see Genesis 11).

Consider what God did to King Herod in Acts 12:21-23 when he allowed people to declare him to be a god:

(21) On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. (22) And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" (23) Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. – Acts 12:21-23 ESV

In an instant, God humbled the proud Herod and took his life.

Writing in Psalm 2, the psalmist declares:

(2) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, (3) "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." (4) He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. (5) Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, (6) "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." – Psalms 2:2-6 ESV

The mighty God of heaven laughs at the kings and rulers of this world who make their proud claims. He speaks to them in His fury, and they are brought low.

Mary describes a mighty God who can bring down the most powerful forces of this earth.

Verse 52

Mary's God was a sovereign God who removed the mighty from their thrones but exalted those who were humble and poor.

Throughout the history of this world, we have seen great leaders fall. Those who reached the pinnacle of their power have been stripped of their thrones in an instant.

We have also seen how God has taken the humble and lifted them to achieve great things. Mary could not explain the sovereign choices of God, but she experienced personally how God had taken her from her "*humble estate*" and lifted her to be the mother of our Lord.

In her mind, it was not those who were great in their minds who were truly great, but those God elevated for His purpose.

Verse 53

Mary goes on to describe God as a God of mercy and compassion. She illustrates this by reminding us that He “*filled the hungry with good things.*” She would have heard how God fed His people with manna as they wandered through the wilderness on the way to the promised land. As a young woman of humble estate, Mary would likely have seen how God provided her family with all they needed. More specifically, however, she was very much aware of how God had chosen her, a young woman of no social standing, to be the mother of our Lord.

While God took note of the poor and needy, notice how Mary tells us that

"he has sent the rich away empty." We should not assume from this that God is against the rich. King David, a very rich man, is described as a man after God's heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

The rich Mary speaks about here are those who have all they need but greedily look for more. They have not shared what they have with those in need or used it for the glory of God. Instead, they have used their possessions for themselves and to gain social standing in their community. Those who have looked down on the poor and needy, find themselves in the same situation when God does to them what they did to others by turning them away. Mary describes a God of justice and impartiality.

Verse 54

Continuing this theme of mercy, Mary illustrates her point by pointing to the nation of Israel. She tells us that God helped "*His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy.*" Consider what Mary has to say here in light of the words God spoke to His people through Moses in Deuteronomy 7:

(7) It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, – Deuteronomy 7:7 ESV

God reminds His people that they were small compared to other nations around them. He did not choose them because of their size or greatness but because He is a God of mercy who looks with compassion on the poor and needy.

Consider also the words of God through Moses in Deuteronomy 9:

(4) "Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. (5) Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. – Deuteronomy 9:4-5 ESV

God made it clear to His people that He did not choose them because they were righteous. We see from the history of Israel that they often wandered from God and His purpose.

According to Mary, God chose Israel to remind them of His mercy. He wanted to show the world that He was a God of mercy, compassion and forgiveness. We see how God chose a small and rebellious nation to be His children and we are encouraged. We understand that if He chose Israel, then He is willing also to show compassion to me in my sin.

Verse 55

As Mary concludes her words to Elizabeth, she directs us to the promise God made to Abraham. He was a relatively unknown man, married to a woman who could not bear children. It was to this man and his barren wife that God made a great promise. Consider what took place when the Lord spoke to Abraham in Genesis 18:

(10) The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. (11) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. (12) So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" – Genesis 18:10-12 ESV

Genesis 18 tells us that Sarah was an old woman, well past the time when she could bear children. God told her, however, that she would give birth to a male child. God would go on to tell Abraham that his innumerable offspring would be a blessing to the entire world:

(17) I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your

offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, (18) and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” – Genesis 22:17-18 ESV

Writing about this, the apostle Paul told the Galatians that the promise of God to Abraham was of a Saviour who would come to save them of their sin:

(8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” – Galatians 3:8 ESV

There are a few points we need to see here in this verse.

First, these final words of Mary come in the context of her reflection on God’s mercy. She illustrates the wonderful

mercy of God by telling the story of how God took a relatively unknown man with a barren wife and gave them a child whose offspring would impact the world.

Second, note the similarity of Abraham's story with that of Elizabeth and Zechariah. Like Abraham, God announced to Zechariah that he would have a son in his old age. Like Elizabeth, Sarah also was beyond the years of childbearing but was given a child through God's miraculous mercy.

Third, consider also how God promised a child to Abraham and Sarah whose offspring would bless the world. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:8 that this offspring would be the Lord Jesus, the child Mary carried in her womb when she spoke these words.

God's promises from the time of Abraham were seeing their complete fulfillment in Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah that day. Through Abraham

and His offspring, God would raise a Messiah who would reign forever throughout all eternity over a people He redeemed at the cost of His life.

Verse 56

Luke does not tell us what took place during the three months that Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah. I am sure that there were many things Zechariah would have liked to communicate in those days but remember that he was unable to speak. We can only imagine the conversations between Elizabeth and Mary. I am sure that Mary also would have been a great support to Elizabeth in her duties around the house in those days. By the time Mary left, Elizabeth would have been nine months pregnant. It is uncertain whether Elizabeth's child had been born before Mary left.

Understand also that by this time, Mary would return to her hometown to face the rumours and confusion about her pregnancy. While Elizabeth's community would be rejoicing in the birth of a son to her in her old age, Mary's community would be confused by her pregnancy outside of wedlock.

Verse 57

The day finally came when Elizabeth, bore a child in her old age. Note that she gave birth to a son. This is what the angel told Zechariah, and was a fulfillment of the promise of God. This confirmation would have assured the couple that the prophecy about their child was also true (see Luke 1:13-17).

Verse 58

News about the birth of a son to Elizabeth in her old age travelled

throughout the community. Luke tells us that when neighbours and relatives heard “that the Lord had shown great mercy” on Elizabeth, they rejoiced with her.

Note the phrase “the Lord had shown great mercy to her.” There was no question in the minds of the neighbours that Elizabeth’s pregnancy was from the Lord and a great act of mercy on His part. They understood the miraculous nature of this birth. They saw in it the merciful hand of God on a woman who, for all her life, had never been able to conceive or bear a child.

Verse 59

As was the custom, Elizabeth and Zechariah brought their child to be circumcised on the eighth day. Male children were officially given their names at the time of circumcision. The

first-born child was traditionally called after his father.

Note that those performing the circumcision and naming of the child, following the tradition of the day, were going to call him Zechariah, after his father. The name Zechariah means, "the Lord remembers." The angel Gabriel, however, had told Zechariah in Luke 1:13 that they were to call their son John which means "Jehovah is gracious."

The challenge for Zechariah here was whether he would follow the tradition of the day or go against that tradition and listen to the words of the angel and call their son John.

Verse 60

The naming of Elizabeth and Zechariah's son took place at his circumcision. It was customary for the first-born to bear the name of the

father but the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he was to name the child John. Remember that Zechariah could not speak because he did not initially believe the words of Gabriel, the angel sent from God to announce the birth of his son (see Luke 1:20). When the time came to name their child, those performing the circumcision were going to name him Zechariah after his father but Elizabeth stopped them and told them that they were going to call him John. Zechariah had communicated this to his wife and she now speaks on his behalf, in obedience to the word of the angel. They willingly disregarded the tradition of the day to be obedient to the word of the Lord.

Verse 61

Those performing the circumcision and naming of the child were confused by his parent's decision to call their young

boy, John. They challenge them on this, reminding them that none of their relatives were called by this name.

Once again Elizabeth and Zechariah are forced to decide between the traditions of their day and the word of the Lord.

I have met people who just do what is expected of them and ignore the direction of the Lord. Traditions can often be confused with the word or purpose of the Lord but they are not always the same. In this case, God was asking John's parents to go against their tradition in the naming of their child.

Verse 62

Uncertain as to whether to take Elizabeth's words seriously, those performing the circumcision and naming of the child turned to the father for confirmation.

Notice how Luke tells us that they “made signs to his father inquiring what he wanted him to be called.” The phrase is somewhat confusing and might be understood in one of two ways.

First, remember that Zechariah and Elizabeth were in their old age when they gave birth to their son. This old age may have taken away Zechariah’s hearing and so those performing the circumcision and naming of his child needed to make signs to be understood.

Second, it also may be possible that Zechariah’s hearing was fine, but those questioning him did not know how to speak to someone who was mute. They made signs in an attempt to communicate not taking into account that his hearing may have been fine. The false assumption may have been that if they could not hear him, then he could not hear them.

However we understand these signs and gestures, those questioning Zechariah were seeking his confirmation of his wife's words about disregarding tradition and calling their child John.

Verse 63

In response to their gestures and questions about the name of his son, Zechariah asked for a writing tablet. Because he could not speak, he wrote his response to them. On that tablet, he wrote: "His name is John."

Zechariah chose to obey the words of the Lord and disregarding the tradition of the day, did as the angel Gabriel had told him to do.

Notice the response of those present that day — "And they all wondered." The word used here is θαυμάζω (thaumázō). It refers to something astonishing. This break in tradition was

an uncommon occurrence. Those present were astonished and confused about the decision both parents made that day.

Verse 64

Zechariah could not have known the impact of his decision to call his son, John. Luke tells us that immediately after writing, "His name is John," on the tablet, Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue loosed. He was able to speak again.

The decision about what to call his son may have been a small decision compared to many in Zechariah's life but it was just as important. We are left to wonder what would have happened had he followed tradition and ignored the word of the Lord in the naming of his son. Would Zechariah have remained mute for the rest of his life?

Obedience brought healing. Notice how Zechariah broke out in words of blessing to God. His heart was filled with joy for this son and the healing he had received for his obedience.

There have been times in my life when I have experienced deep blessings because of obedience to what would be considered small things in the eyes of this world. God's purpose for John did not hang on his name. God could have accomplished His purpose through him even if his name was not John. What a difference obedience made in the life of his father, however. He stood up against the tradition of the day and chose God's purpose. That made all the difference in his life. It also set the tone for the life of his son by giving him an example to follow – absolute obedience in everything even if it goes against the accepted norms of society.

Verse 65

When Zechariah obeyed the word of the angel and was healed, fear came to all their neighbours. Zechariah's obedience to the Lord brought great personal benefit to himself but the miracle that took place in his life went beyond any personal benefit he received. People in his neighbourhood saw a practical demonstration of the power of God in his healing. They knew that God had moved among them to bring this healing. The name of the Lord was honoured in the decision of Zechariah and Elizabeth to name their child John. Word of what took place that day spread throughout the hill country of Judea. People began to speak about Zechariah's healing, the son born to them in their old age and their break with tradition.

Luke tells us that "fear" came on their neighbours. The word φόβος (phóbos) speaks of reverence, respect, honour or even terror. That fear was toward the

God of Israel who had moved among them in such a way.

Zechariah and Elizabeth's obedience had a powerful impact on their community and brought a deeper respect and reverence for the God of Israel. We are left to wonder what our absolute obedience to God in even small things could do for our society today.

Verse 66

Note one more impact of Zechariah and Elizabeth's obedience to the angel here. Those who heard about the miraculous birth of John and the miracle that had accompanied it, asked the question: "What then will this child be?" The events surrounding the birth of John pointed people to his ministry. John's reputation as a miracle child given to his parents in their old age, and the prophecy about him prepared the

people to listen to what he would tell them about the Lord Jesus. Luke tells us that those who heard about John laid up the things they heard in their heart. That is to say, they remembered them and awaited their fulfillment. They understood that the hand of the Lord was on this child for a special purpose.

God asked Zechariah and Elizabeth to be the parents of a special child. God miraculously worked through their absolute obedience and submission, demonstrating His presence on that child and preparing the community for the day when his purpose would be revealed.

Verse 67

We discovered that when Zechariah wrote, "His name is John," on the writing tablet in obedience to the word of the Lord through the angel Gabriel,

his mouth was opened and he began to praise the Lord (Luke 1:64). Luke recounts the words of Zechariah that day as he explodes in praise and thanksgiving to God for his son and the purpose of God through him. Understand that neighbours and community members did not know the significance of John's birth. The miracle of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the birth of John and the healing of Zechariah needed explanation. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah brings this explanation. Luke calls the words of Zechariah a prophecy. That is to say, they were the words of God through him to bring clarity to what had just happened. The word of the Lord accompanies the signs the people saw that day.

Verse 68

Zechariah begins his prophecy with a word of praise. He blesses the Lord God of Israel because He had visited and redeemed His people.

This visitation came in part through the angel Gabriel announcing the birth of Zechariah and Elizabeth's son John. Remember also, however, that Zechariah and Elizabeth had spent the last three months with Mary the mother of Jesus.

God had visited His people not only in the person of his angel Gabriel but also in the birth of Zechariah's son John and the miracles that accompanied his birth. More specifically, however, the visitation of God came through the child in Mary's womb, whom Zechariah knew to be the promised Messiah come to save His people from their sin.

Zechariah declared that God had come to redeem His people. The word λύτρωσις (lútrōsis) used here speaks of paying a ransom to release a person

from bondage. This was the work the child in Mary's womb would do. He would pay the penalty for our sins and release us from the guilt of sin and death.

Verse 69

Zechariah informs his people that God had raised a horn of salvation in the house of David.

The Jews of that day understood that the Messiah would come through the line of David. Zechariah declared that this child had been born.

Note here the phrase "horn of salvation." For an animal, the horn is a weapon. Imagine a bull chasing you with his horn pointed directly at you. That horn is a symbol of power and strength, and something to be feared. Imagine now that this powerful horn is pointed at your enemy sin and death. What can stand against this horn of

salvation. It crushes sin and demolishes death. Nothing can stand against this weapon intent on rescuing us from our enemy.

The horn here, according to Zechariah, is a person. That person was the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can conquer sin and the grave, breaking its bondage and restoring us to a right relationship with the Father. Note that this horn of salvation is “for us.” God sent His son to conquer sin and the grave for you and me. Zechariah marvels at this thought.

Verse 70

What Zechariah declared about the “horn of salvation” sent by God to deliver us from sin and its consequences was not Zechariah’s words alone. God spoke the same message through his holy prophets on many different occasions.

Consider the words of God in Genesis 3:15 when sin first entered the world:

(15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” – Genesis 3:15 ESV

God told Adam and Eve that He would raise a child from their offspring to crush the head of Satan.

Isaiah predicted that a virgin would conceive and bear a child named Immanuel which means “God with us.”

(14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14 ESV

This promised Immanuel would be pierced and crushed for our

transgression but bring us healing:

(5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. – Isaiah 53:5 ESV

Zechariah's prophecy about the Messiah was confirmed through the mouths of many other prophets.

Verse 71

The coming of the promised "horn of salvation" was so that we could be saved from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us. The people of Zechariah's day understood this in a very practical way. They believed the Messiah would come and give them peace from war on this earth. They expected that He would usher in a time

of prosperity and wealth and serve as their earthly king.

The prophecy of Zechariah, however, speak of even greater enemies than people who do not like us. We will certainly have our share of people who hate us as believers, but our greater enemies are sin, Satan and his demonic forces. Jesus sets us free from the consequences of sin. We are released from the curse of eternal separation from God in hell. We are given authority and power over Satan and his legal hold on us. The child in Mary's womb would bring salvation much greater than the Jews of that day fully understood. This salvation is still available to all who will turn to Jesus today.

Verse 72

Note how the verse begins with the word "to." This shows us its connection

to the previous verse. Zechariah declared in verse 71 that God saved His people from their enemies and from the hands of those who hated them. He tells us now the reason God did this. According to Zechariah God saved His people for three reasons. He lists the first two here.

First, God saved His people from their enemies to show “the mercy promised to their fathers.” God made a promise to His people to save them and He would keep that promise because He never broke His Word. He was a God of truth.

Second, God saved His people “to remember his holy covenant.” Because He is a merciful God, He committed Himself to His people to care for them and watch over them. He would never abandon them in their need. He was a God of faithfulness.

Verse 73

The covenant and promise God made with His people went way back to Abraham. Consider what God said to Abraham in Genesis 22:

(15) And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven (16) and said, "By myself, I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, (17) I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, (18) and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." – Genesis 22:15-18 ESV

Many generations have passed, but God has not forgotten His promise. He still cares for Abraham's descendants and will fulfill the promise made in ways Abraham could never have imagined. God is raising a people from every tribe and nation to be blessed through Abraham.

The apostle Paul declared that the true descendants of Abraham are not just from Israel but "children of the promise." That is to say, men and women from every nation who have come to faith in Jesus Christ and been born again as a child of God:

(6) But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." (8) This means that it is

not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. – Romans 9:6-8 ESV

The oath God made to Abraham was not just to one nation but to all nations of the earth. People from every tongue would know the Saviour and possess the gate of their enemy (Genesis 22:17). They would enter into the holy covenant sworn to Abraham. The truth and faithfulness of God have been proven from one generation to another as He brings more and more men and women into the covenant made with Abraham so many years ago, giving them victory over Satan and saving them from their sins.

Verse 74

There is one final reason why God has saved us from our enemies. Zechariah

declares here that “being delivered from the hand of our enemies,” we “might serve without fear.”

The first point we need to see here is that we are saved to serve our Deliverer. While our salvation is an act of mercy on God’s part given to us when we did not deserve it, He has called all He saved to service and obedience. Those who belong to the Lord and a part of his “holy covenant” (verse 72) are called and equipped to live a holy life as children of God. They are given gifts and callings as his ambassadors to this world. This is a high and noble calling.

Secondly, observe here that we have been delivered from our enemies to serve without fear. We can step out boldly even onto enemy territory because the cross of Jesus Christ has conquered sin, Satan and the grave. We have power to overcome. We have been equipped with God’s Word to

guide and His Spirit to empower and lead. Beyond this, however, we need not fear for our own lives. Our salvation has been assured through Jesus Christ's work on the cross. We do not serve in hope that we might be saved, that has already taken place. The enemy may take our physical body but we will live on in eternity in the presence of our Lord. Zechariah rejoices in such a wonderful salvation.

Verse 75

Notice how we are to serve our Lord, according to Zechariah.

First, we are to serve in holiness. The word used here is ὁσιότης (hosiótēs) and refers to a life in tune with God and His purpose. It is derived from the word "hósios" meaning sacred. The holy person, in this sense, walks according to the Word of God.

Second, we are to serve in righteousness. The word righteousness is δικαιοσύνη (dikaíosúnē) and speaks of justice. Justice demands that we meet the claims and standards required of us to be in a right relationship with another person. Consider, for example, a thief who steals from me. By taking my property, he is now indebted to me and owes what he has taken from me. For justice to be met, that thief must restore what he took and pay for any loss I incurred as a result. Only then can he be again in a right standing before me.

What do I owe God? To what extent has my sin indebted me to Him? How could I ever pay that debt?

For justice to be met in my case, the penalty for my sin needs to be paid and accepted. This is the work of Jesus Christ in my life. He pays the penalty on my behalf. Beyond the payment of sin, however, is the consecration of my

life to the one who died for me. I must walk now as one who has been pardoned. I must submit to His Lordship in my life. Righteousness has to do with payment for my sin through Jesus Christ and my commitment now to walk under His Lordship.

Notice, finally, that Zechariah tells us that we are to serve in holiness and righteousness "all our days." A thief may be fined and put in prison for a few years and then released. The nature of our debt and the claim of God upon our lives will never end. For all our lives, we will be indebted to the mercy of God who saved us from our enemies. Throughout eternity, we will magnify this mercy and grace.

Verse 76

Turning his attention now to his son John, Zechariah speaks a prophetic word about him. Note first that the

infant John would be called “the prophet of the Most High.” There is only one person who could be called the Most High. God alone deserves this title, for there is no one higher than Him. Zechariah’s son would declare the word and purpose of the Lord God to His people.

Observe second, that as a prophet of the Most High, John would “go before the Lord to prepare His ways.” When we were missionaries on the island of Mauritius, the prime minister of India came for a visit. Such an important dignitary was treated with special attention. Police officers were sent before his car to ensure that nothing stood in his way, interrupting or delaying his journey. Beyond this, however, were the many people who prepared for his stay in the country. As a prophet, John went before the Lord Jesus, announcing His appearance, declaring Him to be the promised

Messiah and introducing Him to the world. He preached a message of repentance and called his people to open their hearts to receive Jesus as the Messiah and accept the work He was about to accomplish on their behalf.

Verse 77

Zechariah prophesied next that his son John, “the prophet of the Most High,” would give the knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sin to his people. Consider how this prophecy was fulfilled in John 1:

(29) The next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! – John 1:29 ESV

Notice how John introduces Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." As his father prophesied, John would give people knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sin by pointing them to the sacrificial Lamb, who would be nailed to the cross of Calvary as payment for our sins.

Verse 78

John the Baptist would give his people knowledge of salvation and forgiveness by introducing them to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

As the Lamb of God, Jesus would suffer and die on a cruel cross. He would lay His life down to pay a penalty for sin He did not commit. Why would He be willing to surrender to such suffering and cruelty? Zechariah offers an answer here. He tells us that it was "because of the tender mercy of our God." Nothing

else can explain why Jesus died in my place except that He is a merciful God.

Zechariah prophesied that the “sunrise would visit us from on high” because of the mercy of God. Every day that the sun rises is an act of mercy. We need to understand, however, that there are only so many sunrises we will see in our lifetime before we stand before Almighty God to give an account of our lives.

There is one sunrise that surpasses all others. Zechariah speaks about the revelation of the Son of God to this earth. Like the physical sun, Jesus rose one day and shone His light upon us, bringing the hope of salvation and eternal life. He came from on high as the very Son of God to demonstrate the tender mercy of God for all who would open their heart to Him and His work. Open your heart to Him, consider His work and accept it as your only hope of eternal life.

Verse 79

Jesus Christ, the sunrise of God, came to this world to shine His light of salvation and hope upon all who were sitting in the darkness and hopelessness of sin. Those upon whom Jesus shone the light of salvation were sitting in the shadow of death under the curse and judgement of God. The light of Jesus Christ revealed the way of peace, that had been hidden to those who did not know God. The peace His salvation revealed was a peace with God and a hope of eternal life in His presence.

Zechariah's very own son, although not the Messiah, would introduce this great Lamb of God to the world. In this Lamb, there was forgiveness, hope and eternal life.

Verse 80

We know nothing about the childhood of John the Baptist, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Luke simply tells us that he grew up and became "strong in spirit." The idea seems to be that John grew up to become a man strong in the Lord and the power of His Spirit. The Spirit of God was upon John and his heart was in tune with God and His purpose.

Note also here that John would leave public life and go into the wilderness. He separated himself from day-to-day worldly affairs and concerns. It appears that he chose a monastic life and devoted himself to seeking the Lord in isolation and preparation for the day God would call him to announce the appearance of His Son.

LUKE 2

Verse 1

Luke tells us that in those days, Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that the Roman world was to be registered. Caesar Augustus reigned over the Roman Empire from about 27 BC to AD 14. The registration was for taxation purposes. Israel, being under Roman domination at this time, was forced to register and pay taxes to Rome.

Verse 2

Luke, whose commitment is to historical accuracy (see Luke 1:1-4), tells us that the registration of Roman

subjects under Caesar Augustus took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge has this to say about Quirinus:

Kυρήνιος Kurēnios; Quirinus (Lk 2:2) which refers to Publius Sulpitius Quirinus, a Roman Senator of an obscure family raised to the highest honors by Augustus. He was sent as governor or proconsul to Syria, first from 4 B.C. (the year of Jesus Christ's birth) to 1 B.C., and again in A.D. 6-11. During his first governorship, the first taxing or enrollment occurred, which necessitated the visit of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. The second census took place A.D. 6 and is mentioned by Luke in Ac 5:37 and by Josephus. – (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge". Cedar Rapids, IA: Laridian, Inc., 2003.

*Electronic Files © 2003 by Laridian.
All rights reserved.)*

Luke tells us that everyone was to be registered in their home town. It appears that each person was to return to the town where they had property. The registration would have required a declaration of property and its value as well as the names of the members of their family.

Verse 4

Joseph went from Nazareth, where he lived, to Bethlehem, his hometown, to register. Some commentators believe that Joseph must have had property in Bethlehem for him to be required to register there. Luke tells us, however, that he went to Bethlehem, "because he was of the house and lineage of David." 1 Samuel 20:6 tells us that King

David was from the town of Bethlehem. Speaking to Jonathan, David said:

(6) If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the clan.' – 1 Samuel 20:6 ESV

Joseph, as a descendant of David, also lived in Bethlehem. Beyond this obvious understanding of the verse, however, is another more important detail we need to see. The prophet Micah declared:

(2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. – Micah 5:2 ESV

A great ruler, whose existence was from the beginning of time, was to be born in Bethlehem, according to Micah. This ruler was the Lord Jesus, the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. The Roman registration forced Joseph to go to Bethlehem at the precise moment Mary was going to give birth to this "ruler in Israel." While it was certainly an inconvenience for Mary and Joseph to make this trip to Bethlehem, it was in fulfillment of an ancient prophecy.

Verse 5

While it was not necessary for Mary to go to Bethlehem for the registration as Joseph could have provided all the information required. Luke tells us, however, that she did go with him.

While there may be some practical reasons why Mary went with Joseph at this point in her pregnancy, of particular importance is the prophecy of

Micah 5:2 stating that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. It is uncertain if Mary and Joseph were considering this prophecy at the time, but what is clear is that God was leading them both there to fulfill the words of Micah.

It is also important to note that a marriage engagement was legally binding and so Joseph would have been required to register Mary as his engaged wife.

Verse 6

As prophesied, it was while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem that the time came for her to deliver her child. The circumstances were not ideal, but God was in it, and His prophetic promise was about to be fulfilled.

Verse 7

There in Bethlehem, crowded with people and no room in the local hotel for them to stay, Mary gave birth to her child. There was no crib for Him and so they cleaned out an animal feeding trough in the barn where they were staying, wrapped their child up in cloth and laid Him to rest. The Saviour of the world was born in humble circumstances. The very best this world had to offer was beneath His dignity, but He willingly laid aside these earthly privileges because He had not come to be comfortable and admired by the crowd. He came to serve and ultimately to die. He identified with the poorest among us and experienced, from His birth what it meant to suffer want.

Verse 8

Luke draws our attention to a group of shepherds in the region of Bethlehem. They were simple people caring for

sheep out in the field. Luke specifies that it was night. The sheep were likely sleeping at this time of the day. These shepherds were there to protect them from wild animals or bandits. It was not a glamorous job but a necessary one if the sheep were to be protected.

Verse 9

This night was going to be unlike any other. As the shepherds watched their sheep, an angel of the Lord appeared to them. Seeing an angel would have been overwhelming enough, but note that the glory of the Lord shone around them. The word δόξα (dóxa), in this case, refers to a physical manifestation of the dignity, excellence and holiness of God that appeared in the form of a brilliant light. This manifestation of the Lord's presence caused the shepherds "great fear." The word translated as fear is φοβέω (phobéō) and speaks of

terror. Coupled with the word “great” here, we see just how afraid these shepherds were. They had been hired to protect the sheep from wild animals and armed thieves but this was something beyond their ability. Who could stand in the presence of such a powerful manifestation of God?

Verse 10

The angel, sensing the shepherd’s fear, tells them they had no reason to be afraid because he had come to bring them good news.

Note first that the news was “of great joy.” This great joy is contrasted here with the great fear the shepherds experienced. What they feared the most brought them the greatest news they could ever have hoped to receive. They found great grace in this powerful manifestation of God. The presence

that could have destroyed them came instead to bring them peace and hope.

Observe second that this news was for “all people.” What they heard from the angel was not to be kept to themselves but shared with all who would listen.

The angel is commissioning these shepherds to proclaim this “news of great joy” to all people. We have received the news to share it. It cannot be kept to ourselves.

Finally, consider the fact that this good news was shared with ordinary shepherds. Prophets of all ages predicted the coming of the Messiah. The proclamation of His appearance, however, falls on simple people like you and me to whom He has revealed Himself.

Verse 11

What was this news of “great joy?” The angel tells the shepherds that on that

very day, a child had been born. Note what the angel tells the shepherds about this special child.

First, he was born in the city of David. The prophet Micah had this to say about Bethlehem, the city of David:

(2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. – Micah 5:2 ESV

It was in the city of David that the great leader “from ancient days” was to be born.

Second, observe that the child born that day was “a Saviour.” Admittedly, the Jews often understood this to be a political Saviour but Jesus came to be a Saviour from an even greater enemy, the power of sin and death.

Next, see that this child was Christ. The word "Christ" means anointed one. He came with an anointing of God upon His life. He was called to a particular role and ministry. He came to set us free from sin, Satan and the world. He was God's chosen and anointed instrument for our salvation.

Finally, this child is Lord. Note the phrase "who is Christ the Lord." The little word, "is" shows us that this was not something He would grow into or accomplish by means of His work. He came as Christ and Lord. He was Lord even as a little infant in His mother's arms. He was ruler from ancient times and that did not cease when He was conceived in His mother's womb. He was and always will be Christ the Lord.

Verse 12

Having proclaimed that a Saviour had been born, the angel then proceeds to

tell the shepherds how they would recognize Him. They would find Him wrapped in swaddling cloth lying in a manger.

The practice of swaddling was common in those days. A child would be tightly wrapped in cloth to imitate the womb and bring a measure of security. It also regulated the temperature of a newborn keeping them warm. It may also have been to protect the child from any harm.

While swaddling was a common practice, what was uncommon was that the swaddled child was placed in a animal feeding trough to sleep. The shepherds would identify the child by His presence in a manger.

There is a powerful contrast between the presence of the angel and the glory of the Lord that caused great fear for the shepherds, and the lowliness of this baby born in a stable and lay to rest in a manger. He was a Saviour for all

people. He identified with the poor but knew wealth beyond measure. He lay in a manger tightly wrapped in swaddling bands but His presence filled the world.

Verse 13

Having communicated his message to the shepherds, the angel was joined by what Luke describes as a “multitude of the heavenly hosts.” The idea seems to be that many other angels joined with the one sent to the shepherds. If the shepherds were afraid of this one angel, we can only imagine how they felt in the presence of many. The revelation of this throng of angels to the shepherds demonstrated just how important the message was.

Notice what Luke tells us the angels were doing as they appeared to the shepherds. They were praising God. Angels appear in Scripture for various reasons. They come to bring messages,

to protect or to guide. Here, however, their main focus was to worship God for the birth of this child born to Mary.

Why would the host of angels appear to the shepherds? They could have appeared to Mary and Joseph but they didn't. Mary and Joseph already had an angelic visitation and knew what God was going to do through their Son. The message of the gospel, however, is for shepherds and ordinary people. Listen again to the words the angel spoke to the shepherds that day:

(11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (12) And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” – Luke 2:11-12 ESV

Note the words “For unto you,” “This will be a sign for you,” and “You will

find.” The message was very personal. The angel spoke directly to these shepherds. The child was for them. There is something very extraordinary about the event that took place in the field that evening. God appeared to ordinary people like you and me and personalized the gospel to them. He spared no expense in doing this. He sent a whole host of angels to the shepherds that night. He also sent His only Son to be born as a man and offered that Son to them as their Saviour. That same offer is extended to you and me as well.

Verse 14

Note the words of the angelic throng who publicly praised the Lord that evening.

First, they proclaim: “Glory to God.” The word glory (δόξα, dóxa) speaks of honour and praise. These angels

praised the name of the Lord God and declared His honour. This honour is given to God in light of the birth of Jesus Christ His Son. The angels are overcome with praise and thanksgiving for the purpose of God in bringing the offer of salvation to His people.

Observe secondly that this glory was "to God in the highest." The word "highest" is translated from the Greek word ὑψίστος (húpsistos) and is derived from "húpsos," meaning height. It is quite possible that the reference to "the highest" is to heaven. The word ὑψίστος (húpsistos), however, can also be interpreted as elevated or lofty. This has led other commentators to see the phrase "Glory to God in the highest," to mean "may the most elevated and highest glory be attributed to God, who offered His son for the forgiveness of sin."

Third, consider the words "and on earth peace." The word εἰρήνη (eirēnē)

speaks about an absence of war. War should be seen, however, in a very broad sense. While we may not be in a country at war with another, we do experience warfare in various ways. For some, that battle is emotional or physical. They struggle with anxious concerns and problems. The warfare may be spiritual as we deal with the question of sin and our separation from God. Still, others struggle with physical ailments that keep them from knowing the peace of God in their lives. Finally, there are those whose battle is with other people and broken relationships with neighbours or family members. The peace Jesus came to offer touches every aspect of our lives. He comes to restore our relationship with God and each other. He comes to guide us through the battles we have with sin, the flesh and the devil.

Finally, note the phrase "among those with whom He is pleased!" The King

James Version translates this phrase as "good will toward men." The Greek phrase being translated is ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας which literally translated means "in human good-will." The word "good-will" (εὐδοκία, eudokía) could also be translated as "please," or "favour." In other words, "among humans, God's pleasure and favour." The angels glorify God because He extended His peace and favour to human beings through the birth of His Son Jesus Christ.

Verse 15

Note the response of the shepherds to the angels' message that night. Luke tells us that when the angels went back to heaven, the shepherds spoke to each other. Clearly, to this point, they had not been communicating. They were fixated on the angels and their message.

When the angels left, however, the shepherds made plans to go to Bethlehem to see what had happened. Understand here that the angel had told them how they would find the child. He would be wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. We are not told how they found the particular stable where Jesus was born, but the words of the angel narrowed their search. They were looking for a stable with a manger in Bethlehem where a swaddled child lay.

Observe also that the shepherds attribute what they heard from the angels to be truly from the Lord. The phrase, "which the Lord has made known to us" makes this clear.

One thing is certain, the shepherds were not content with words alone. They were compelled in their hearts to find this child. I have met many who are content to know the truth of the gospel but who have never personally

met the Saviour. Hearing the gospel and meeting the Saviour are two different matters. Those who hear must also say: "Let us go ... and see this thing that ... the Lord has made known to us." Don't be content with words alone. Go and see for yourself. Prove it to be true not just in words but in reality.

Verse 16

Observe what Luke tells us about the response of the shepherds to the angel's message in the words, "They went with haste." What Luke does not tell us is what happened to the sheep. This was not the shepherd's priority right now. Like the disciples Jesus called at the sea of Galilee, who left their nets and followed Him, so it was with these shepherds. They left their sheep to seek the child.

We are not told how long they had to search for the stable, but according to Luke, they found Jesus just as the angel had told them – “lying in a manger.” Consider this in light of the words of God through Jeremiah the prophet who said:

(13) You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (14) I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile – Jeremiah 29:13-14 ESV

The God who declared His salvation through the angel directed the steps of the shepherds who determined in their hearts to seek His Son. God wants you to find His Son. He declares His

salvation to you for that purpose. If you, like these shepherds, determine in your heart to seek Him, He will make Him known to you.

Verse 17

Notice the response of the shepherd when they found the stable where Jesus was born and saw that everything was just as the angel had told them. Luke tells us that they “made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” The saying made known to them is found in verses 11-14. The angels told them that they would find the Saviour, Christ the Lord, who had come to bring us peace, lying in a manger in Bethlehem.

Understand something important here. The shepherds did not just repeat the words given to them until they had confirmed the truth of those words. The news of a Saviour was amazing,

especially when it came from the angel in such a spectacular manner. The shepherds, however, had to experience the reality of that truth for themselves before they could truly share it. That is what is happening here. These shepherds went and saw for themselves that what the angel said was true. They met the child and confirmed the message they heard. The words they shared were words of experience and very personal to them. It is one thing to hear the gospel and quite another to meet the Saviour. It is those who meet the Saviour for themselves who truly have something to share.

Verse 18

The testimony of the shepherds caused “all who heard it to wonder.” The word used here is θαυμάζω (thaumázō) and speaks of being struck with admiration,

to be astonished or to marvel. When the shepherds shared their story, all who heard what they said were struck with awe and marveled at what they told them. The story of the angels and the baby lying in a manger amazed those who heard it. This is not to say that they all believed that this child was the Son of God, but they certainly had to admit that the experience the shepherds had was a supernatural one.

These shepherds were simple people. They did not have years of theological education. All they had was the revelation of the angels and their encounter with Jesus. That was all that was required. They simply shared their experience of the Christ and the revelation they had. People all around were struck with admiration at their story and forced to consider that this Jesus might indeed be the promised Messiah.

Verse 19

Note Mary's response to the events that had taken place. Luke tells us that her response was two-fold.

First, "Mary treasured up all these things." The word translated as "treasured up" is συντηρέω (suntērēō). It carries the meaning of preserving, keeping safe, or guarding carefully. These memories and stories were very special to Mary. Imagine you had a precious gem worth much to you. What would you do with this treasure? You would keep it in a safe place so that it would not get lost or damaged. This is what Mary is doing. The story of the shepherds and the revelation of the angel to them was something she kept safe in her mind. It was very special to her, and a reminder of the privilege she had been given to raise this child.

Second, Mary "pondered" these things in her heart. The word συμβάλλω

(sumbállō) is derived from “sún,” meaning together, and “bállō” meaning to cast. Imagine that you had a jigsaw puzzle with a variety of pieces. These individual pieces need to be put together for the puzzle to make sense. The supernatural stories and events that took place in those days were overwhelming and confusing. Mary gathers the various stories about her child and puts them together like a jigsaw puzzle. As she pondered in her mind, putting piece by piece together, Mary came to a clearer sense of God’s purpose for her life and the life of her child. Like each of us today, Mary did not have all the answers, but piece by piece, God was making that known to her and over time, they began to make more sense.

Verse 20

After their time in Bethlehem, “the shepherds returned.” They returned to their sheep and we hear nothing more of them. Notice, however, how their lives had changed. Luke tells us that they returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard, seen, and been told. They could not be the same after these events. Their lives would have been forever changed.

I do not doubt that they shared their story many times throughout their lives. We don’t know how many lives were impacted by their testimony or how many people dismissed their story as fanatical. What we do know is that God had a purpose for them and used them to proclaim the birth of His Son, Jesus, to the people of their day. I suspect that this calling followed them to the end of their lives.

Verse 21

Jesus was born into the Jewish faith. His parents were devout Jews. As was the custom of that day, after eight days, He was brought to the priest to be circumcised and named. Mary and Joseph called their child Jesus which means Saviour. The name was prophetic and spoke of the work He had been called to do. It had been given to Mary by the angel who announced to Mary that she would conceive.

(31) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. – Luke 1:31 ESV

Verse 22

Leviticus 12 describes the requirements in the Law of Moses concerning the birth of a child. When a woman bore a male child, she would be unclean for

seven days (Leviticus 12:1). On the eighth day, she was then to bring her child to the priest for circumcision (Leviticus 12:2). Even after the circumcision of her male child, the woman was unclean. She would remain in this condition for thirty-three days (Leviticus 12:4). During that time she was not to go to the place of worship or touch anything holy (Leviticus 12:4). When her days of purification were over, she was to come to the priest with an offering of a one-year-old lamb or if she could not afford a lamb, two turtle doves or two pigeons. These were offered up for her as a sacrifice to complete her purification rites.

Observe also here that on the day of Mary's purification, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. Understand that Jesus was their firstborn and there were particular regulations concerning a firstborn child in the Law of Moses.

Consider what Exodus 13:1,2 tells us about this:

(1) The LORD said to Moses, (2) "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast is mine."
– Exodus 13:1-2 ESV

Numbers 18:15-16 gives us more detail about this when it says:

(15) Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. (16) And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the

*sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.
– Numbers 18:15-16 ESV*

There was a redemption price to be paid for a first child. This was because, when the children of Israel were in Egypt, God spared the firstborn of their families but killed the firstborn of every Egyptian household (see Exodus 12:29-32).

Verse 23

Luke makes it clear that Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the Lord God because of the regulations of the law of Moses stating that every firstborn was holy to the Lord. The word holy here carries the sense of being set apart for God. The reason for this had to do with the time the angel of death passed over the land of Egypt, slaying every child that was not in a home protected by the blood of the

lamb painted on the doorposts (see Exodus 12). From that time forward, firstborn children belonged to the Lord and needed to be redeemed if the parents wanted to keep them for themselves.

Verse 24

While in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph offered an appropriate sacrifice for Mary's purification. The law of Moses stated that a woman who gave birth to a child was to offer a one-year-old lamb to the Lord. Recognizing that not every family could afford such a costly sacrifice, however, it made provision for a less costly one for poorer families:

(8) And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make

atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” – Leviticus 12:6-8 ESV

Mary and Joseph, not having money to offer a one-year-old lamb, brought the offering of “two turtledoves or two young pigeons.” This shows us that our Lord was born into a very simple family and not into wealth.

Verse 25

Luke recounts the story of a man by the name of Simeon who was in Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple. Note four details about Simeon here.

First, he was “righteous.” The word righteous is δίκαιος (díkaios) and refers to something that conforms to what is right and just. Simeon was a man who walked according to the law of God and sought to please God in all that he did.

Second, Simeon was also devout. The word used here is εὐλαβῆς (eulabēs). It is derived from the word "εὐ," meaning good or right, and "λαμβάνω," meaning to take. The idea is a person who takes what is good. This taking of good sometimes comes at a high cost. A devout person is willing to pay the price to do what is good, even if he has to give his life in return.

Third, Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel. Consolation is offered to those who are suffering. Consider this in light of the words of Isaiah 40 which predicted the coming Messiah:

(1) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice

cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." – Isaiah 40:1-5 ESV

These prophetic words spoke of comfort being brought to Israel through the revealed "glory of the Lord" announced by a voice crying in the wilderness. These verses are quoted by John the Baptist in Luke 3:4-6 where Luke tells us that he was the voice crying out in the wilderness, announcing the presence of Jesus, the revealed glory of God.

Simeon's "consolation of Israel," was none other than the Lord Jesus who came to set His people free from sin. Simeon was waiting for the Messiah.

Fourth, observe that the Holy Spirit was on Simeon. In those days the Holy Spirit came upon individuals to equip them for ministry or to give a revelation of some sort. In this case, we will see that one of the roles of the Holy Spirit on Simeon was to reveal and confirm the presence of the Messiah in the person of the baby Jesus.

Verse 26

The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. The word Christ means anointed. In this case, the Lord's anointed was none other than the promised Messiah who was to come. Simeon knew that he would see this Messiah. Verse 25 tells us that he

waited in Jerusalem for the “consolation of Israel.”

Verse 27

Luke tells us that Simeon came “in the Spirit into the temple,” on the very hour Jesus’ parents were present. The phrase “in the Spirit” seems to imply that Simeon was being led by the Spirit. The Spirit of God put it on his heart to go to the temple at that moment to meet the Lord Jesus and His parents.

As for Jesus’ parents, they were at the temple in simple obedience to the law of God and its regulations about purification for Mary after the birth of her son. God is orchestrating the circumstances and timing to accomplish His purpose.

Verse 28

Not only did the Spirit of God lead Simeon to the temple at that precise moment, but He drew his attention to the child who had come with Mary and Joseph that day.

Many parents came to the temple with their children. Circumcisions and purifications were common enough in those days. Jesus was no different in appearance than any other child. What was different, however, is what the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon about Him. This was the person he had been waiting to see.

Nothing but the Spirit of God could have revealed this to Him. We are not told what Simeon expected when God told him that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Was he looking for a preacher who spoke and did miracles? Was he looking for a great ruler who would lead His people away from Roman domination? We are not told. What we do know, however, is that

Simeon did not see miracles or leadership. He saw a baby completely dependent on His parents. He reached out to that child, held Him in his arms, and blessed Him.

Verse 29

Note Simeon's response to seeing the baby Jesus. He sees a fulfilment of the prophetic word given to him in Luke 1:26:

*(26) And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. – Luke 2:26
ESV*

Simeon was confident that he had seen the "consolation of Israel" that day. This is what he had longed to see. He was ready now to die in peace for he knew that God had been faithful to His

word and sent a Saviour for His people. He did not need to know all the details or see what this child would grow up to become. Simeon was confident that He would accomplish the purpose of God.

Verse 30

Simeon declares here that he had seen the salvation of God. The salvation of God was a person. He was the sacrificial lamb. He is the penalty paid for my sin. He is my hope of eternal life. Salvation is not so much about what happened to me as it is about Jesus. Our hope, our pardon, our life and our strength to live are all in Him, and without Him, there would be no salvation. Our salvation is, first and foremost, a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot separate what happened to us from Him.

Verse 31

Simeon tells us here that God prepared this salvation in the presence of all people. The word prepare used here is ἑτοιμάζω (hetoimázō) and means to make ready. It is used in Luke 17:8 and speaks of a servant preparing his master's supper:

(7) "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? (8) Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? – Luke 17:7-8 ESV

Note how the master tells the servant to prepare supper for him. For that to happen there are a variety of things that need to take place. The meal needs to be cooked, the table needs to be set, its readiness announced and the

food served. Simeon understood that like these servants, God had been preparing many years for this event. He had spoken through the prophets, rose up John the Baptist to announce His coming, and chose a young virgin to be the mother. He presented Him to Simeon as the promised Messiah.

God had been preparing for the right moment to send His Son. Simeon understood, however, that this Son was not just a Saviour for the Jewish nation but for "all peoples." The child presented to Simeon on that day, would be the world's Saviour. This, again, was something the Holy Spirit had to reveal to Simeon.

Verse 32

Simeon prophesied that the young baby before him would do two things.

First, He would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles." Imagine that you

walked into a dark room. Because of the darkness, you see nothing and find yourself banging into and tripping over everything. This is what it was like for the Gentiles. They lived in darkness and could not understand or accept the prophetic word spoken about Jesus in ages past. They did not know the salvation of God because they were unable to understand or see the truth. Jesus came as a light to open their eyes so that these revelations would make sense.

Second, this young baby before Simeon would be a glory to the people of Israel. The Saviour of the world was born in Israel. From Israel, the message of salvation would reach the entire world. He would walk on Jewish ground and speak in the Jewish language. He would communicate the truth of salvation to them before any other nation. His greatest act of mercy was accomplished on a Roman cross

planted in Jewish soil. What a privilege it was to be the people through whom the Saviour was revealed. What an honour it was to be the chosen people to receive this Messiah. This baby Jesus was Israel's greatest boast and glory.

Verse 33

What was the response of Mary and Joseph to the word of Simeon that day? Luke tells us that they marveled at what was said about Him. Understand that the angels had already spoken to Mary and Joseph about these things. Elizabeth declared Mary to be the mother of her Lord. The shepherds also communicated that He would be a Saviour. Jesus' parents marveled, not because the news was new to them, but because of how God kept speaking this truth to them by various means. Over and over again the truth about their baby was being confirmed. He

was the Son of God. He was the Saviour to come. The parents couldn't help but marvel at the fact that they should be His guardians and that God was true to His word.

Verse 34

Luke 2:27 tells us that Simeon came to the temple "in the Spirit." The Holy Spirit revealed to him that the child Jesus was the prophesied Messiah who had come to be the glory of Israel and a light to the Gentiles (see verse 32). Simeon now turns his attention to Mary and speaks a prophetic word to her.

He begins by blessing both Mary and Joseph. This was, in reality, a prayer for the hand of the Lord and His presence to be upon them for good.

Speaking particularly to Mary, Simeon tells her that her child had been appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel. We should consider this

statement in light of what Paul told the Corinthians:

(23) but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. – 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 ESV

Jesus, Mary's son, would be a controversial figure in Israel. His people struggled to accept Him as the promised Messiah. They rejected Him and crucified Him on a Roman cross. Jesus was a stumbling block for these Jews.

Among His people, however, were some who did accept Him as the Christ. These individuals gave their lives to Him and spread the news of His work and salvation. These sons and daughters of God rose above the

persecution and mockery of the Jews, and through them, the message of the gospel reached the ends of the earth, bringing people of all ages and cultures into the kingdom of God.

Note second, that Simeon told Mary that this child had been appointed as a sign that was opposed. These were difficult words for Mary to hear. Jesus was a sign from God. The Greek word used here is σημεῖον (sēmeíon) and speaks of something that is given as a token or miraculous evidence of God's purpose. Jesus came as evidence of God's goodwill and grace. He came as a sign of God's purpose for salvation and pardon. He came as a sacrificial lamb from the Father as evidence of His willingness to forgive and restore His people to Himself. He was a sign "opposed," however. The Jews turned their backs on Him and rejected Him as their Messiah and Lord.

Verse 35

Simeon goes on to tell Mary that a sword would pierce her soul. These words appear to be connected to his prediction in verse 34 about Jesus being a sign opposed. The opposition to Jesus would be like a sword piercing her soul. Mary would watch the crowds turn their backs on her son. She would stand by the cross as they mocked Him. We cannot tell how much seeing this would have broken her heart.

Note, however, that this opposition to Jesus would reveal the thoughts of many hearts. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ revealed the sinfulness and hardness of the human heart. God the Father sent His Son to die for the sins of the world, but the world rejected and killed His Son, turning their backs on His offer of forgiveness and pardon.

Verse 36

In the temple that day was a prophetess by the name of Anna, the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She had been married only seven years when her husband died. She was now an old woman. She, too, had been strategically placed in the temple that day.

Verse 37

We learn a little more about Anna here. Verse 36 tells us that she had been married for seven years when her husband died. She lived the rest of her life as a widow and never remarried. She was now eighty-four years old.

Note also that, as a widow, she remained in the temple worshipping, fasting and praying night and day. Her life was devoted entirely to the Lord her God.

Verse 38

Luke tells us that Anna was present “that very hour.” She was present when Simeon prophesied about the baby Jesus to Mary and spoke of Him as the promised Messiah.

Seeing Jesus and hearing the words of Simeon, Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about the Christ child to all who were “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

The phrase “all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem,” speaks of those who understood they needed a Saviour. These individuals were waiting for the Messiah to come and establish His kingdom. Anna shared with them that this Messiah had been born.

Verse 39

Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph “performed everything according to the

Law of the Lord." Their sacrifices were made, and Mary had been purified according to the regulations written in the law of Moses.

Upon completion of their spiritual obligations, Mary and Joseph returned from Jerusalem to Nazareth, "their own town." While Joseph was originally from Bethlehem (see Luke 2:3,4), he and Mary had now made Nazareth their hometown.

Verse 40

We know nothing about the childhood of Jesus Christ. Luke does tell us four things here, however, about Jesus as a child in the home of Mary and Joseph.

First, Jesus grew. That is to say, Jesus went through the normal process of maturing. He experienced growth pains and adjustments. God did not send an adult to this world but a baby who matured like every other child. He

moved from absolute dependence on His parents into adulthood and learned from them and His experiences in life.

Second, Jesus became strong. A strong child is a healthy child. Luke is telling us something more than this, however. For Jesus to become strong, He needed first to be weak. As the Son of God, He laid aside His strength to become a man, dependent on His mother and father. He grew in strength as any child would. He knows our weaknesses and can identify with our limitations.

Third, Jesus was filled with wisdom. While His body was like ours, Jesus demonstrated great wisdom and understanding. I am sure that He set Himself apart from other children His age as a result of this wisdom and understanding of life with its problems and trials. Mary and Joseph would have likely noticed this wisdom and seen it as evidence of the hand of God on their child.

Finally, Luke tells us that the favour of God was upon Jesus. Luke does not go into any detail about how this favour was manifested in Jesus' life. Suffice it to say that there was evidence that the hand of God was upon the life of Jesus protecting, keeping, empowering and giving wisdom.

Verse 41

Luke speaks of an incident that happened in the childhood of Jesus that demonstrates something of the wisdom and favour of God upon His life.

As devout Jews, it was the custom of Mary and Joseph to go each year to Jerusalem for the Passover. Today the route from Nazareth to Jerusalem is about 145 kilometres or 90 miles.

Making this trip in those days would have been a significant undertaking for the average family who likely travelled by foot or donkey.

Verse 42

This particular trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem was special. Jesus was now twelve years old. This was the age at which a Jewish male would begin to follow the Jewish traditions and laws as an adult. While to this point, He had only watched His parents observe the religious traditions and customs, this time He would be a full participant.

Verse 43

Luke tells us that when the Passover feast was over, Jesus' family began their journey back home. Unknown to His parents, Jesus did not go with the crowd that departed the city. He stayed behind.

Understand that there would have been a large crowd in Jerusalem that day. As a twelve-year-old and adult under the law, Jesus had the freedom to move

about the crowd. Among them were friends and relatives from Nazareth with whom He would have been spending time. As a child with great wisdom, his parents had no concerns about Him.

Verse 44

Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem after the Passover. Having travelled for a day without seeing Jesus, they began to wonder where He was. Luke tells us that they expected Him to be with their relatives or acquaintances. They began to search among their fellow travelers to find Him.

Verse 45

When Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus among their fellow travelers, they returned to Jerusalem in hopes of finding Him there. We can only imagine

the concern these parents had in not being able to find their twelve-year-old son. Remember that they had travelled a day before discovering His absence. It would have taken them another day to return to Jerusalem. They were, however, determined to find Him.

I suppose there are many people like Jesus' parents in our day who have come to the realization that they have been travelling life's road but left Jesus behind. Not all of them, however, have the humility to return to Jerusalem to find Him again.

Verse 46

Mary and Joseph did not immediately find Jesus. Luke tells us that it took them three days to locate their son. If it took one day to return to Jerusalem, they would have spent another two days looking for Him in the city. In the end, they found Him in the temple,

listening to the instructions of the teachers and asking them questions.

It is easy to assume that because He was the Son of God, Jesus already knew all there was to know about His Father and His ways. This does not seem to be the case. He had to learn about His heavenly Father just as we do. He had to study to know His purpose. This appears to be what Jesus is doing here with the temple teachers.

Verse 47

Note the response of the teachers in the temple to the presence of this twelve-year-old Jesus. Luke tells us that they were amazed at His understanding and answers.

It appears that the teaching in the temple took the form of a question-and-answer style. We saw in verse 46 that Jesus had been asking questions but we discover here that He was also

answering questions posed by His teachers.

Jesus' teachers were amazed at His answers. The word translated "amazed" here is ἐξίστημι (exístēmi). It is derived from "ek," meaning out, and "hístēmi," meaning to stand. Together these two words convey the sense of being transported outside of oneself. The teachers could not believe what they were seeing and hearing. What they saw in Jesus was beyond anything they had ever heard before. They were astonished and marveled at His comprehension of spiritual matters.

Understand that while Jesus had to learn like any other child, the hand of His Father was upon Him giving Him wisdom and understanding beyond that of the normal child His age.

Verse 48

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus they were “astonished.” The Greek word used here is ἐκπλήσσω (ekplḗssō) meaning to be struck by a force or to be knocked senseless. It is quite a powerful word but we should not see it in a negative sense. Mary and Joseph could have been struck with a powerful sense of awe or amazement seeing their son converse in such a way with the top religious leaders of the day. It is possible that Mary and Joseph listened to some of the discussion between Jesus and His teachers.

Eventually, Mary asked Jesus an important question: “Son, why have you treated us so?” The question reflects her deep concern for Him and not knowing where He was for three days. It is also a question about why He did not seem to show any concern for them and their anxiety. She tells Him how distressed they had been

about not knowing where He was all this time.

Mary's question is of great importance. It brought up the matter of Jesus' obligation to His earthly parents and His priorities in life. It was an immensely practical question, but challenged Jesus to reflect on His calling and purpose on this earth.

Verse 49

Observe Jesus' answer to Mary's question in verse 48. Jesus answers by asking Mary two questions.

First, Jesus asked Mary why they had been looking for Him. Initially, the question seems strange as we can understand how any parent would be concerned about finding their missing child. Jesus' question here, however, is not so much about the natural response of a parent to a missing child as it is specifically about their anxious concern

for Him. Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was the Son of God, chosen to be the Saviour of the world. They understood that the hand of God was upon Him and would keep Him until that purpose was accomplished. Their anxious distress was misplaced. In essence, Jesus seems to be asking: "Why have you become so distressed looking for me? Don't you know how my Father is keeping and protecting me for His purpose?"

The second question is an extension of the first: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Where else would one who was called by God to be the Saviour of the world be but in the presence of His Father, preparing for the work to which He had been called? Jesus understood from an early age the calling of the Father on His life. His whole life was devoted to that purpose, and nothing distracted Him from the task. These questions would have

shown Mary and Joseph just how committed Jesus was to the call of God on His life. It revealed that God was speaking to Him and that they were going to have to loosen their grip and let Him do the will of His heavenly Father.

Verse 50

Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph did not understand Jesus' answer to their question. They were likely so distressed and possibly angry with Him that they were unable to grasp the depth of what He was telling them that day. Many things keep us from hearing what the Lord is saying. Sometimes we need to address our attitudes before we can truly hear what He wants to communicate.

Verse 51

It would be possible to assume that from the time Jesus began to understand the call of the Father on his life, he would have done His own thing. This is not the case. It was the will of the Father that Jesus learned to be submissive and obedient to His parents. Jesus remained in His family and, according to Luke, was "submissive to them." While Jesus understood He was called, He still needed to learn obedience and submission. What better place could there be for those lessons than in His family? Jesus would begin His ministry at the age of thirty. This means that He would have to wait another eighteen years before He would see the fulfillment of God's purpose for His life. He would not only learn submission and obedience but also patience in those days.

As for Mary, she stored up the stories, incidents and words of Jesus in her heart, keeping them like a precious

treasure. She would, over the years, put these various pieces together to get a better sense of what God had been preparing for her Son.

Verse 52

From the age of twelve onward, Luke tells us that Jesus increased in wisdom, stature and favour with God and man.

Jesus learned wisdom through His teachers and the things He experienced just like you and me. The word “stature” here is ἡλικία (hēlikía) and refers to maturity. Jesus grew from childhood into adulthood and maturity as an adult. Jesus also matured spiritually and socially. He grew in favour with God as He learned to walk in His purpose. He also grew in favour with people as He demonstrated the character of His Father to them in actions and behaviour.

LUKE 4

Verse 1

Jesus is ready to begin His ministry. Note, however, that He did not begin until after His baptism. What is of particular significance about this is that it was at that time that the Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The Spirit anointed Christ and empowered Him for ministry at His baptism. Jesus would exercise His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit and under His leadership. Luke begins verse 1, therefore, with the words, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit." Jesus did not minister in His strength alone. He

was at one with the Spirit and the Father in everything He did.

Note that Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. As the Son of God, He both submitted to and expected this guidance. In this case, the Holy Spirit directed Jesus into a barren, desolate and lonely place.

When it comes to the leading of the Spirit, we do not get to pick and choose the direction we want to follow. We follow even when it leads us to these desolate and lonely places. The Spirit of God must have our absolute obedience.

Verse 2

For forty days Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. This is where the Spirit of God led Jesus. It was the purpose of God that Jesus be tempted. Understand that it was not His purpose, however, that Jesus submit to those temptations. You can

be sure that the Spirit who led Jesus into this place would also empower Him to overcome each trial sent His way.

Luke tells us that during those forty days, Jesus had nothing to eat. He was hungry and His physical body was in a weakened condition after that time. Consider this for a moment. If you knew you had a moment of intense effort ahead of you, would you not prepare yourself by eating a good meal? That, of course, would be true if the effort was physical or mental. In Jesus' case, however, it was His soul that was being tempted. Jesus was engaged in a spiritual battle. While physical food may benefit the body and mind, it does not have the same impact on our soul. The strength of our soul is not in physical food but in spiritual. We can be assured that during those forty days, his soul was being amply fed as He communed with His Father and found strength in the Spirit.

Verse 3

It was when Jesus was in this weakened physical and mental state that the devil decided to attack Him. Note first how the devil, addresses this weakened condition by telling Jesus to command that the stones in the desert be changed to bread. Understand that there was nothing wrong with Jesus changing stones into bread. Later in His ministry, He would change water into wine. We can be sure that Satan is not speaking to Jesus out of compassion and mercy. There is a very subtle purpose in His mind to distract Jesus from the purpose of the Father.

Consider the statement of Satan more closely. Note the words, "If you are the Son of God." This is the basis for the question and any action Jesus might take. Satan is not concerned about Jesus' hunger; It would be to his advantage if Jesus died of hunger in

the wilderness. Satan is challenging Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God.

Consider those forty days of isolation and struggle in the wilderness. Luke tells us that he was tempted by the devil in those days. He had just been baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of God. This leads Him to isolation, barrenness, physical hunger and intense demonic oppression and temptation. Where was the Father in this? Where was the blessing of God? Where were the masses of people accepting Him as the Messiah? In the midst of all this, Satan comes to Jesus and says, "Are you really the Son of God? Is this how a father treats his son? Is this what is in store for you? How can you say you are really the Son of God when this has been your lot these forty days? You sat in heaven beside the Father but now look at you. You're rejected and abandoned." It is in

this context that Jesus' faith is tested. Did He trust the leading of the Spirit? Would these circumstances make Him waver in His faith and knowledge of who He was? Would He feel the need to listen to Satan and prove to Himself that He was the Son of God by some miracle?

Verse 4

Note Jesus' response to Satan. Turning to the Word of God, He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone." The passage in Deuteronomy goes on to say: "but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

Jesus resists Satan by turning to the Word of God. He reminds Him that circumstances do not dictate truth. God's Word is a reliable and authoritative guide in all matters. This is what He clung to in times of

barrenness, isolation and loneliness. Yes, His hunger was real. Yes, those forty days were brutal. God's sovereign Word, however, would never change. The Word of the Father was sufficient for Him.

Verse 5

Luke tells us that the devil next "took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

The word translated as "took Him up" is ἀνάγω (anágō). It is derived from aná, meaning up, and ágō, meaning to bring or to lead. Together these words carry the sense of leading someone up. The Textus Receptus texts (the foundation for the translation of the King James Version) tell us that the devil took Jesus up to a mountain.

What is particularly interesting in this verse is that the devil then showed

Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.” The question we need to ask here is this: How did the devil show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time? There is no mountain on earth from which you can physically see every nation.

In our day of internet connectivity, it might be possible to catch a glimpse of every nation on a computer screen if we were tied to a live feed.

Understand, however, that this was not a reality in those days. To see every nation on the earth in a moment requires spiritual vision. Something greater than human vision is in place here. Satan and Christ are speaking on a different level and seeing things that are not visible to the human eye.

Verse 6

With the vision of every nation on the earth before them, Satan then made a

commitment to the Lord Jesus. He told Him that he had the right to give both the authority and glory of all these nations to Him and that he would do so on one condition. He will state that condition in the next verse. For now, consider three very important facts.

First, Satan tells Jesus that all the nations of the earth have been delivered over to him. When did this happen? It all began in the Garden of Eden when our first parents rebelled against God. At that time, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and submitted to Satan and his temptation. Sin ravaged their souls, minds and bodies as a result. It spread, like a cancer, from one generation to another, separating humankind from God and His purpose. Sin was the dominion of Satan. He was absolute lord and master over every sinner. He held their destinies in his hands and used them to accomplish his evil purposes on earth. All of this would

end up in eternal separation from God. The world as we know it was delivered over to Satan as its lord and master through sin and rebellion against God.

Second, Satan tells Jesus that authority had been delivered to him and he had the right to give it to whomever he pleased. The word Satan uses here in the Greek language is ἐξουσία (exousía). It speaks about permission, liberty or power. In other words, Satan has been given permission, liberty and power over this world. That permission and legal right came when we chose to rebel against God. Sin is the power Satan has over us, the prison cell in which he keeps us, the control he has over our destiny, the language our sinful hearts understand, and the darkness that blinds our eyes. As long as sin is in the picture, he has absolute authority over us.

Third, Satan tells Jesus that he has the glory of the nations at his disposal.

"Their glory... has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will."

Consider the nature of this worldly glory. How many powerful leaders in history have been the tools of Satan to promote his evil agenda? How many famous entertainers and movie stars have pushed his evil philosophy? How many men and women have sold their souls for great riches and ease? These individuals are powerful, famous, influential and rich in the eyes of this world. They have everything they want in life. But all of this comes at a cost. Listen to what Jesus had to say about this in Mark 8:

(35) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (36) For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? – Mark 8:35-36 ESV

To obtain the glory of this world has cost many their eternal soul.

Yes, Satan has been given authority and worldly glory to give to whomever he pleases. To obtain it, however, you must sacrifice your soul to eternal hell. Satan offers Jesus this authority and glory.

Verse 7

In verse 6, Satan offers to give up his authority and release all the world's glory to Jesus on one condition. He states that condition here – "If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Consider this offer for a moment.

What would all the glory of the world accomplish? Worldly fame, riches and influence would not achieve the purpose of God. The Lord Jesus could have been born in a famous family with riches and influence but He shunned

that and chose the simple home of Mary and Joseph. His desire was not to be rich and famous. God had a much greater purpose for His Son than this.

What about the authority Satan offered Him? It was not authority over a dominion of sin that Jesus sought. His kingdom was not of this world. His was a kingdom of righteousness and victory over darkness not authority in darkness. Christ had no interest in worldly glory and authority over a sinful kingdom.

More important was the fact that if Jesus sinned by worshipping the devil, then all hope of salvation would have disappeared. He was the only spotless lamb. There was no other sacrifice that could have been made to cover the sins of the world. If He failed His mission, the world would have been lost. Satan would have become the undisputed ruler over this world, and we would

have been eternally separated from God.

Verse 8

Jesus responds to Satan's second temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy 5:13:

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

Once again, Jesus is guided by the Word of God. He commits Himself to absolute obedience and faithfulness to His Father's will. He would not worship Satan. He shunned everything this world had to offer – its glory and its authority, to be faithful to His Father and His purpose for His life.

Verse 9

In this final recorded temptation, Satan takes Jesus to Jerusalem and sets him on the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle of the temple was likely the highest point in Jerusalem. Notice the words of Satan here:

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here."

Satan challenges Jesus to prove Himself. There is no question that Satan knew that Jesus was the Son of God. In this very chapter, Luke records an incident where evil spirits came out of many declaring Jesus to be the Son of God:

(40) Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. (41) And demons also came out of many,

*crying, "You are the Son of God!"
But he rebuked them and would
not allow them to speak, because
they knew that he was the Christ.
– Luke 4:40-41 ESV*

The words of Satan, "If you are the Son of God," are intended to stir Christ to action. It is a natural response to defend our honour. Satan is seeking to stir Christ to prove himself by doing something so spectacular that it would remove all doubt that He was the Son of God.

Verse 10

Notice how Satan uses Scripture to tempt Jesus. He quotes Psalm 91:11 in this verse. In Psalm 91, the psalmist speaks of how the Lord is his protector and that He would send His angels to guard those who belonged to Him.

What Satan is saying to Jesus is something like this: "The Scriptures say that God keeps those who love Him, and sends His angels to protect them. You, Jesus, declare Yourself to be the Son of God. If this is the case than God would certainly send His angels to protect and keep You. He would not let anything happen to His beloved Son. Show me if that promise of God is true. Prove to me that You are really the Son of God. I want to see those angels come running to your aid as you fall off the pinnacle of the temple."

Verse 11

Satan quotes from Psalm 91:12 where the Psalmist tells us that God protects His own. He recites this verse to Jesus after telling Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. He is asking Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God and that Psalm 91:11-12 is true.

Satan is insinuating that if Psalm 91:11-12 was true, Jesus could foolishly jump off the temple, and angels would come rushing to His aid, catching Him on the way down so He didn't get hurt. This, according to Satan, would prove that Jesus was the Son of God.

I have seen this satanic reasoning before. I have heard people say if God wanted me to stop having an adulterous affair, then He would stop me from doing so. That is like saying, I am going to jump from the pinnacle of the temple and expect that if God doesn't want me to do so, He will catch me on the way down. The fact of the matter is this: If you would open your eyes and see the truth of His Word you would not have jumped because God has already made this matter clear. If you jump, you do so in disobedience and disregard for His Word. Many have hit rock bottom and ended up in despair because they have foolishly

jumped when God's Word was asking them to remain firm.

Verse 12

Jesus responds to the temptation of Satan with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:16: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

Imagine that you were caught doing something wrong and brought before a judge. The judge finds you guilty, but because it was your first offence, he lets you off with a warning.

What would happen if you left that courtroom and immediately went out and did the same thing again? Would you not test the patience of that judge? When you stand before him a second time, you can be sure it will not go as well for you as it did the first. To test God is to disrespect His patience and compassion and misuse or dishonour His mercy and grace.

By foolishly jumping off the pinnacle of the temple Jesus would have been misusing the grace of God to save Himself from harm. In my country, we have a number we dial when there is a medical or criminal emergency. To use that emergency number foolishly or for anything other than a genuine emergency is a punishable offence.

We all know that God is a compassionate and merciful God. There is comfort and support for all who need it. We must, however, take these characteristics seriously. To joke, manipulate or take these qualities for granted is a serious offence. Some people believe they deserve God's mercy and grace. This is not true. God is not obligated to extend His hand to any one of us. Grace, by definition, is unmerited or undeserved favour.

We are to live our lives taking care of what God has given us. We are to walk sensibly and honourably in all we do.

We are to respect God, our bodies, our neighbours, and the environment around us. God is not our servant. It is not His obligation to clean up our mess when we disobey and fall short of His standard. When we jump foolishly off the pinnacle of the temple, outside of His purpose, to prove a point, He is under no obligation to pick up the pieces when we hit rock bottom. If anything, we will need to confess our foolish disrespect and sin and fall upon His undeserved favour for pardon.

Verse 13

The time came when Satan could do no more. The test was over and Jesus had conquered every trial and temptation thrown at Him. Luke tells us that Satan left the presence of Jesus.

Note, that while Satan left the presence of Jesus, he did not give up. Luke tells us that he “departed from him until an

opportune time.” Satan was watching for every opportunity in the life of Jesus to infiltrate and cause disturbance. We see this in the hatred and jealousy of the religious leaders who sought to kill Him. He shows up in the life of Judas who betrayed Jesus. He influenced Peter to deny his Lord. Most of all, we see it in the bitter crucifixion and cruel death of our Lord.

Verse 14

When Jesus’ temptation was over, Luke tells us that He returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit.” Observe here that the Lord Jesus trusted and walked in the power of the Spirit. This was the power that moved and enabled Jesus. He chose to draw from this divine source rather than an earthly strength. Notice what took place as a result:

"A report about him went out through all the surrounding country."

The ministry of Jesus demonstrated that God was moving through Him. People could not help but notice this. What Jesus did could not be explained by any human strength. What He preached was not from any worldly wisdom. People took note and began to share it with others.

Verse 15

Luke tells us that Jesus would go to the synagogues and teach there. There was freedom for visitors to speak in these centres of worship.

Note the response of the people to His teaching. He was "glorified by all." The word glorified is δoξάζω (doxázō) and refers to recognition, praise or honour. In other words, the people recognized

Him and His teaching and held Him in high regard.

Verse 16

One of the first places Jesus would minister was in Nazareth, where he had grown up. Note that, as a Jew, he attended synagogue on the Sabbath. On this particular occasion, Jesus was given the scroll to read a passage from Scripture.

The synagogue in Nazareth was familiar to Him. This is likely where he and his family attended every Sabbath. The people present knew Him and His family.

Verse 17

During the service at the synagogue, there would be various readings. This reading was from the prophets and a scroll containing the words of Isaiah

was handed to Jesus to read. Jesus took the scroll, unrolled it until He found a particular portion and began to read.

Verse 18

The passage Jesus read that day was from Isaiah 61:1-2. In this section of his prophecy, Isaiah declared a time of great prosperity for the people of God (Isaiah 60). This would be a time when ancient ruins would be rebuilt (Isaiah 61:4), and the salvation of God would appear (Isaiah 62:11). The portion of this prophecy Jesus read declared that the Spirit of God had come upon His servant and anointed him to proclaim a five-fold message. Luke gives us four of the five prophetic announcements here in this verse.

First, good news would be announced to the poor.

Second, liberty was proclaimed to those who were held in captivity.

Third, the blind would recover their sight.

Fourth, a declaration of liberty was pronounced to the oppressed.

It is not hard to see how Jesus fulfilled these first four declarations. He healed the blind and brought hope to the oppressed, captive and poor. He cared for them and demonstrated compassion and mercy toward them. Beyond this, however, we also see how Jesus ministered to the spiritually oppressed. He set them free from demons and falsehood. He opened the spiritual eyes of the blind. He set those captive to sin, free, through the forgiveness He brought on the cross. Those who were spiritually poor and destitute were made children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Verse 19

The final prophetic declaration of Isaiah 61:1-2 was a proclamation of the year of the Lord's favour. We can see how the return of God's people from exile would have been a powerful fulfillment of that wonderful word of Isaiah.

Understand, however, that many prophecies of the Old Testament have multiple fulfillments. The release of God's people from Egypt or Babylon was a picture of another release. The favour shown to God's people in those days pictured an even greater day of favour to come. Jesus came to proclaim a day of salvation better than release from Babylon or Egypt. He came to announce release from the curse of sin and its consequences. He came to declare the forgiveness and salvation of God.

Verse 20

Having read the portion of Isaiah, Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. In our modern Christian churches, the act of sitting down indicates that we have completed what we were doing. This is not the case here. A teacher in that culture would sit down to teach. Note what Luke tells us happened when Jesus sat down:

"And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him."

By sitting down, Jesus indicated that he had something to say. Everyone then turned to listen to His word.

Verse 21

With every eye fixed on Him, Jesus declared that the prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled in their hearing. The words were very bold, but it is unclear

how much those sitting in the synagogue understood their meaning.

It would certainly have been good news to hear that the year of God's favour had come. Who wouldn't want to have good news proclaimed to the poor, liberty announced to the captive, blind people healed and the oppressed released from their burden?

Jesus, however, was declaring something much deeper than this that day. He was declaring that He was the one prophesied to bring this year of God's favour. He was the Messiah and ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic word. Those present were hearing the voice of the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah.

Verse 22

Note the response of the worshippers in the synagogue to the words of Jesus.

First, they spoke well of Him. In this context, they seem to appreciate the words He shared.

Second, they marveled at the gracious words coming from His mouth. The word χάρις (cháris), translated as gracious, speaks of favour, kindness or compassion. Grace is a quality of God. The words of Jesus appear to reflect this quality as He spoke. The presence of God was evident in Jesus' instruction. This seems to strike the people who heard him speak.

Third, those present in the synagogue asked the question: "Is not this Joseph's son?" They were surprised by the fact that someone so simple, who lived among them, could have spoken with such grace. This would prove to be a stumbling block for the citizens of Nazareth. They could not understand how God could use one of them to be His servant. Their concept of what God

could do among their own was very limited.

Verse 23

The people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, wondered how a son of Joseph could speak with such grace. They could not believe that anyone from Nazareth could amount to anything, especially if they came from a poor family like that of Mary and Joseph. Note Jesus' response to these individuals.

Jesus quotes a common proverb of the day to His fellow citizens. That proverb went something like this: "Physician, heal yourself." The meaning is quite simple. The doctor was often so busy healing other people that the health of his own family was often ignored. What was Jesus saying to the people of Nazareth that day and what was its connection to the proverb?

It appears that Jesus had been in Capernaum before coming to Nazareth. While there, He had performed some miracles. This was not the case in Nazareth, however. He did not perform any miracles in His hometown.

The people of Nazareth were telling Him that he was like a doctor who healed others while ignoring his own family. He performed miracles for other towns but not for the town where He grew up.

Verse 24

Jesus, understanding the heart of Nazareth toward Him, reminded His fellow citizens that no prophet was accepted in his hometown.

There is an English proverb that says: "Familiarity breeds contempt." In other words, we treat those closest to us with the most disrespect. The people of Nazareth were an example of this

proverb. They couldn't believe that anyone of significance could come from their town. They had watched Jesus grow up among them. How could a little boy from Joseph's family ever become a prophet of God? They were too familiar with Him to accept Him as anything but the son of Joseph the poor carpenter of Nazareth.

Verse 25

Jesus has just told the people of Nazareth that no prophet was accepted in his hometown. He illustrates this with a story from the time of Elijah. In 1 Kings 17, we read how God proclaimed through the prophet that there would not be any rain in the land. Jesus tells us here how that prophetic declaration came true, and for three and a half years, no rain fell on the land. This resulted in the failure of crops and a great famine. As you can imagine,

there was tremendous hardship in those days among the people of God.

Verse 26

Jesus speaks here of the famine that took place during the days of Elijah, as recorded in 1 Kings 17. While there were many widows in the land of Israel suffering in those days, God sent His servant to minister to a widow in the city of Zarephath in Sidon. Elijah was sent to other people and not to his nation. Jesus uses this illustration to show that God does not always send His prophets to their people. Many times, His prophets are better received outside their hometown.

Verse 27

Jesus uses a second illustration to show how God often sends His servants to other nations rather than their people.

This time He reminds the citizens of His hometown of the story of Naaman the Syrian from 2 Kings 5. In that story, God sent Naaman, the military commander, to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. While there were many lepers in Israel, it was this Syrian that God wanted to heal.

These illustrations of Jesus illustrate how important it is to be sensitive to the leading of the Lord. God does not always lead us in ways that make sense to ourselves.

Verse 28

Over the last few verses, Jesus has been speaking directly to the people of Nazareth. He showed that He understood their feelings toward Him. He knew how they struggled to accept Him as a prophet of God when they knew Him as the son of Joseph. He knew they were jealous of the fact that

He had performed miracles in Capernaum and not in Nazareth. He showed them from Scripture how God used both Elijah and Elisha to minister to people outside of their nation.

These words seemed to upset the people of Nazareth. Luke tells us that they were “filled with wrath.” Jesus’ words seemed to rebuke them. They were unwilling to believe His claim to be a prophet of God. It may be that by using the illustrations about Elijah and Elisha, they saw Jesus as placing Himself on the same level as their great saints, something they were unwilling to accept. All of these things made them angry with Him.

Verse 29

Notice the anger in the hearts of the people of Nazareth toward Jesus. They were so furious with His claim and His words, that they rose up in the

synagogue and drove Him out of the town. They didn't want Him or His influence to be in their community anymore. They brought Him to the brow on which the town was built to throw Him off the cliff to His death. This type of murderous hatred has its source in Satan himself. We who are His servants must prepare ourselves for such attacks.

Verse 30

While the people of His hometown wanted to kill Him, this was not His time nor the way Jesus was to die. Luke tells us that He "passed through their midst and went away." We are not given any further details about this. Did He simply walk away from them? Did something miraculous take place? We are not told. Suffice it to say that God had another purpose for His Son and He was kept from this untimely death.

The Father had a purpose and the people of Nazareth would not hinder that purpose. Those same protective hands will be upon us as we walk in obedience to His will.

Verse 31

From Nazareth, Jesus made His way northward to the top of the Sea of Galilee, where Capernaum was located. As he did in Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began teaching the people.

Verse 32

There was something about the teaching of Jesus that astonished the people of Capernaum. The word translated astonish, here is ἐκπλήσσω (kelps'). It speaks of striking with force by a blow or knocking someone senseless. It describes a strong

response from the people who heard Jesus speak. They experienced Him as someone who possessed great spiritual authority in His words.

Verse 33

Present that day in the synagogue was a man who had an unclean spirit. This man appears to be interrupting the service by crying out in a loud voice. It is uncertain why he was in the synagogue. He may be an instrument of Satan to disrupt the worship of God. What is important for us to note, however, is the fact that there was a great need present that day. Here was a man with an unclean spirit needing to be set free.

I have been a pastor in a small rural church for a number of years now. It has never ceased to amaze me how many needs walk through the doors of the building where we meet. Sickness,

pain and brokenness are the norm. Here in the synagogue of Capernaum was a man held hostage by an unclean spirit. This man was in the presence of those who claimed to know the God who could set him free. He was indeed interrupting the worship, but those cries were also cries for help and deliverance.

Verse 34

Notice what the man with the unclean spirit said.

First, the spirit cried, “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Understand here that the demon is speaking. His words are not necessarily a reflection of the heart of those present in the synagogue. The authority of Jesus threatened the efforts of this demon in the man. The power of Jesus’ preaching was pushing back the darkness of Satan and this

demon was threatened. You can almost hear him uncomfortably scream, "Leave us alone."

Second, the unclean spirit cried out, "Have you come to destroy us?" The unclean spirit knew that there was hostility between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. This spirit also knows that this man who preached with authority also had authority over them. He had indeed come to destroy the power of the evil one over the souls of men and women. He had come to set them free from their evil domain.

Finally, note that the unclean spirit knew what the people in the synagogue in Capernaum did not know as of yet. This spirit knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God. That is to say, He was the Messiah who was to come to bring pardon, and victory over sin and the kingdom of Satan. It was this fact that brought fear to the unclean spirit. He had authority over the man he

oppressed, but there was one present who was greater than him. This Jesus had authority over even the hosts of hell for He was the Holy One of God.

Note here how the unclean spirit speaks in the plural. It may be that the spirit is speaking of itself and the man he possessed. It is as if the unclean spirit spoke for the man and his destiny was tied to its. Jesus would change this alliance however, the separate the one from the other.

Verse 35

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit when it spoke through the man attending the synagogue. Notice several details here.

First Jesus rebuked this unclean spirit. The word used here is ἐπιτιμάω (epitimáō) which speaks of a strong admonition. Jesus speaks with authority. He can do this because he has power over this demonic spirit.

Second, Jesus told the unclean spirit to be silent. I have heard of cases where individuals hold conversations with evil spirits. Jesus did not do this. He simply silenced them. What these spirits of Satan had to say was not worth listening to. We are not to give them any opportunity to spread their lies and deceit.

Third, Jesus, having compassion for the man, commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him. We see from this that the spirit had been living in that man, speaking through him and likely influencing his way of life. The spirit had to be removed if he was to live a normal life again. Jesus took authority over this spirit and demanded it leave the man's body.

Fourth, the spirit was forced to obey the voice of Jesus. Note that when this spirit left, the man felt something happen in him and he was thrown to the ground as a result.

Finally, Luke tells us that while the man was thrown to the ground when the spirit left, he was not harmed. Luke knew that these unclean spirits had the power to harm. In this case, however, Jesus did not permit this to take place. We see the authority of Jesus over demonic spirits here.

Verse 36

The response of the worshippers in the synagogue was one of amazement. Note that they expressed this amazement by saying, "What is this word?" Luke explains what they meant by this question in the second half of the verse.

Notice the words, "For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" By beginning with the word "for," Luke connects what he says with what had just been spoken by the people. In

other words, Luke is explaining the meaning of the question, "What is this word?" Luke is telling us that, in essence, the people were saying something like this, "What kind of word is this that when He speaks, even the demons are forced to obey?"

Verse 37

What the people saw taking place that day in the synagogue began to spread throughout the community and surrounding regions. The power demonstrated by Jesus over evil spirits was something the people could not keep to themselves. Here was a religious leader who spoke with power and authority. He was not someone who could be ignored.

Verse 38

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus went to Simon's house. Simon would later become more commonly known by the name Peter, the disciple of Jesus.

Observe that Peter was a married man. He owned a home in Capernaum and before becoming a disciple of Jesus, made his living as a fisherman. It appears that Peter's mother-in-law lived with them at this time. The fact that there is no father-in-law mentioned may indicate that she was a widow at this stage in her life and was living with her daughter and Peter, who were caring for her in her senior years.

When Jesus arrived at Peter's home, his mother-in-law was sick with a high fever. Those present appealed to Jesus on her behalf. In other words, they asked Jesus if He would heal her of this fever.

Verse 39

Notice the response of Jesus to the request to heal Peter's mother-in-law.

First, He stood over her. Peter's mother-in-law was likely lying down in bed. Jesus went where she was and stood over her bed.

Second, Jesus rebuked the fever. The word Luke uses here is the same word used in verse 35 when Jesus spoke to the unclean spirit. Jesus spoke with authority and commanded the fever to leave.

Observe that the fever left her immediately. The fever responded to the voice of Jesus, just as the unclean spirit did. Jesus demonstrates His authority not only over unclean spirits but also over disease and sickness.

Having been healed of her fever, Peter's mother-in-law responded by rising from her bed and offering hospitality to

Jesus and His disciples. This was the least she could do in response to her healing.

Verse 40

News about how Jesus healed the man with the unclean spirit, spread throughout the region (see verse 37). By the time the sun was setting that day, those who heard this news had brought sick and diseased friends to Jesus for healing. Luke tells us that He “laid His hands on every one of them,” and they were restored to health. It appears that everyone who came that day experienced the touch of Jesus and went away whole.

Verse 41

Luke recounts how demons came out of many who came to Jesus for healing that evening. We read of cases in

Scripture where demons were the cause of physical afflictions and diseases and by casting out the demon, the affliction was healed.

Luke appears, however, to tell us that demonic affliction was not always the cause of sickness or disease. We see this in how he tells us in verse 40 that "everyone" who came to Jesus was healed. Here in this verse, however, he recounts that demons "came out of many." The use of the word "many," implies that demons did not come out of all. Some were healed without any evidence of demonic oppression.

What is of interest to Luke here is how many of the demons cried out, "You are the Son of God!" Demons of hell declared Him to be the Son of God and fled from Him in terror. These demons had no doubt about who He was and feared His name and His authority.

Notice how Jesus rebuked the unclean spirits and would not allow them to

speaking. Luke tells us that the reason for this was that they knew Him to be the Christ. The question we are left with here is why would Christ silence such a declaration? There may be two reasons for this.

First, everything had its time. A declaration that Jesus was the Christ, would have stirred up the religious leaders and divided the people. In Luke 4:16-30 we see the response of Nazareth to Jesus telling them that He was the prophet spoken of in Isaiah 61. They brought Him to the top of the hill and wanted to cast Him off to His death. It was not time for Jesus to die. It was not His intention to stir up the crowds and divide them over this issue before that time.

Second, the demons of hell were not the ones to declare Him as the Messiah. Jesus wanted nothing to do with the words of demons. Consider this in light

of what Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:14:

(14) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? – 2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV

The ministry of Jesus was separated completely from the darkness of Satan. No demon of hell would announce His presence. No unclean spirit would have any part in His ministry. Jesus pushed every evil spirit of hell away, resisting every temptation, and blocking His ears to anything they had to say.

Verse 42

Luke tells us that “the sun was setting” when people arrived with the sick and diseased that day (see verse 40). We

are not told how long into the night Jesus ministered to the people. Luke tells us, however, that when it was day, He left for a desolate place.

Jesus' intention is very likely to recover from a night of intense ministry. I have often felt deep emotional, spiritual and physical fatigue after a time of ministry. Jesus needed time for rest and refreshment in the presence of the Father. He needed to get away from people and the constant demand.

Jesus intentionally left the ministry to rest and be with His Father. It is easy for us to place ministry at the highest level in our lives. Jesus willingly walked away from opportunities for a higher cause, to rest and be refreshed in His relationship with the Father. Ministry is not our highest calling in life. An intimate and personal relationship with God is a much higher calling.

Note how people continued to seek Jesus. They did not want Him to leave

their community. There were so many needs in this one town that Jesus could have remained there for the rest of His earthly life. Needs, however, do not equal calling. God had a calling on Christ's life that would take Him away from the needs in Capernaum to other towns and cities. Jesus needed to walk in the call of God and not be distracted by the needs of any one community.

Verse 43

To those who wanted Him to remain in Capernaum, Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well."

Note that Jesus went on to tell the people in Capernaum that this was why He had been sent to this earth. Jesus did not remain in this one town because He had been called to preach in other towns as well. The work in Capernaum was not completed, but it

was not the purpose of God for His Son to remain there. He was to announce the good news in many towns of Israel before He laid down His life for them.

If we focus on need, we will miss the call of God. There are needs everywhere. We must learn instead to discern the purpose of God for our lives and walk in it.

Verse 44

The verse tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Judea. There is some confusion here in the original Greek manuscripts from which this verse is translated. A note in the English Standard Version indicates that some early Greek manuscripts use the word Galilee instead of Judea.

Galilee was in the northern part of Israel in the region of the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan River flowed from

the Sea of Galilee toward the south into the Dead Sea where Judea was located.

The King James Version of the Bible tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Galilee and not Judea as translated in more modern versions. It is generally understood by Bible scholars, based on the evidence of the ancient manuscripts, that the word Luke used was Judea. From the context of the passage, however, this is not so clear.

From Luke 4:31 we understand that Jesus is in the region of "Capernaum, a city of Galilee." Luke then goes on in the next chapter to tell the story of how Jesus began to call His disciples when He was at the Sea of Gennesaret (see Luke 5:1). Gennesaret is the region by the Sea of Galilee and is an alternative name for the Sea of Galilee. The context seems to indicate that Jesus did not leave to go to Judea but remained longer in Galilee. Luke's statement

about Jesus preaching in the synagogues of Judea, therefore, seems to be out of context.

Another issue of concern with the translation of Judea in the ESV is a parallel text in Mark 1. Mark seems to recount the same events with the healing of the man with the unclean spirit (compare Mark 1:21-28 with Luke 4:31-37), and Jesus going to Simon's house and healing his mother-in-law (compare Mark 1:29-31 with Luke 4:38-39). Mark also tells us how many came to Jesus at sundown with the sick and those oppressed by demons (compare Mark 1:32-34 with Luke 4:40-41). Mark even tells us how Jesus went to find a desolate place to pray (compare Mark 1:35 with Luke 4:42). What is significant here is how Mark concludes the section with these words:

(39) And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues

and casting out demons. – Mark 1:39
ESV

Mark tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Galilee. There does not seem to be any question about the location where Jesus preached in Mark's account. Ancient manuscripts agree that the word used in Mark's account is Galilee, not Judea.

While we are not one hundred percent certain which is the right word here, or exactly what Luke is trying to convey, we do understand that Jesus did preach in synagogues in both Judea and Galilee.

LUKE 3

Verse 1

Luke moves ahead in time. It is now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, and Pontius Pilate was then governor of Judea; Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was the tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and finally, Lysania was the tetrarch of Abilene.

The Roman Caesar, as the emperor, held the top position in the nation. In this case, Tiberius, although he appeared to be unpopular, provided stability, peace, and prosperity for the Roman Empire at the time of Christ.

The Roman governor was given charge to administer a particular district in the empire. Pontius Pilate was the governor of the region of Judea. He is known in the New Testament for his role in the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Roman tetrarch governed one-fourth of the empire. In some cases, he was called a king, as in the case of Herod, who was the tetrarch of Galilee (see Luke 1:5, Mark 5:22, Luke 2:3).

Verse 2

Luke continues to give us the time frame of the chapter by citing that it was during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

Note that Luke tells us there were two high priests at this time. This was very unique as it was not the practice of the Jews to have more than one High priest. In its devotional comments on

John 18:12-18, Ligonier Ministries has this to say about this dilemma:

Although Caiaphas was the high priest recognized by the Romans, it seems that Annas was still regarded by the Jews as the legitimate holder of the sacred office. The Romans had deposed Annas from the priesthood in AD 15, about fifteen years before Jesus' trial. But according to Jewish custom, the high priest was high priest for life, so the Jews would have continued to see Annas as the legitimate office holder. (<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/taken-to-the-high-priest>)

This explanation seems to explain why Luke speaks here of two high priests in those days.

It was in these unique days that the Lord spoke to John, the son of Zechariah, while he was living in the wilderness. The implication here is that God began to call John into his ministry

and sent him from the wilderness to the people of Israel.

Verse 3

Notice the response of John to the Lord speaking to him. He went around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

We must understand what John is doing here. What was the subject of his message? Luke tells us that he proclaimed a baptism of repentance. Let's consider a few details about this baptism of John.

First, observe what the prophet Malachi prophesied about "Elijah the prophet" who would come before the "great and awesome day of the Lord."

(5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

(6) And he will turn the hearts of

fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.” – Malachi 4:5-6 ESV

Malachi told his people that God would send a prophet like Elijah before the coming of the Lord Jesus. Jesus tells us in Matthew 17:10-13 that this prophet was John the Baptist. Malachi prophesied that John would turn the hearts of the fathers and children toward each other lest the Lord come and strike the land with destruction. In other words, John would call His people to repent and be reconciled with each other before the coming of the Lord. John's message of a baptism of repentance was prophesied, therefore, by Malachi.

Second, observe that John practiced a baptism of repentance. This baptism is not to be confused with the baptism of

Jesus, which would be instituted later. The key component in John's baptism was repentance and preparation for the coming Messiah. The person being baptized needed to repent of their sin. John preached this message and practiced this baptism in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, lest He come and "strike the land with a decree of utter destruction" – Malachi 4:6 ESV. How disrespectful and blasphemous it would be to receive the Messiah walking in sin and rebellion against the God who sent Him! John prepares the way for the Lord through his baptism. The Jews were familiar with the use of water for cleaning. The Levitical priests were cleansed, in part, through the sprinkling of water:

(6) "Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. (7) Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the

*water of purification upon them,
and let them go with a razor over
all their body, and wash their
clothes and cleanse themselves. –
Numbers 8:6-7 ESV*

When a person came into contact with a dead body, they were to separate themselves and be unclean for seven days, after which they were to be sprinkled with water, bathe and wash their clothes before they could be clean again.

*(19) And the clean person shall
sprinkle it on the unclean on the
third day and on the seventh day.
Thus on the seventh day he shall
cleanse him, and he shall wash his
clothes and bathe himself in water,
and at evening he shall be clean. –
Numbers 19:19 ESV*

The Jews practiced ceremonial
cleansing by sprinkling or bathing in

water. John called for his people to repent of their sins and be cleansed through the water of baptism. It should be observed here that ceremonial cleansing was not the same as the salvation Jesus came to offer. Many Jews were cleansed by the water of purification but returned to their sin and were not right with God.

Luke goes on to tell us that John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sins. Once again we must understand two important details here.

First, while John baptized, he was not the one forgiving sin. John had no authority to forgive sin. People repented before God and received His forgiveness. John baptized them with water to seal them and illustrate what God had done in their lives through their repentance.

Second, forgiveness, in this case, is not the same as the salvation Jesus came to offer. John's baptism did not save

those who came to him from the penalty of sin, it merely sealed and illustrated forgiveness and the mercy of God to pardon.

Many are forgiven, but not all are saved from the penalty of sin. God may forgive a sinner for a particular sin, but that sinner may never become His child and will be separated for all eternity from God. Countless animals were sacrificed in the Old Testament for the forgiveness of particular sins, but the offensive sin nature was not addressed. These same people would come repeatedly for more forgiveness but still end up separated from God because of their sinful nature.

I do not doubt that many of those who were baptized by John genuinely repented of sin, but not all who were baptized would come to know the Saviour John preached. That is why, after preaching a baptism of repentance, John then pointed those

baptized by Him to the Lamb of God,
who alone could take away the sins of
the world.

Verse 4

Luke introduced the reader to John the Baptist in verse 3. He tells us that John was the one Isaiah spoke about when he prophesied in Isaiah 40:3:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Matthew tells us a similar thing when he says:

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." – Mt 3:1-2

Mark demonstrates his agreement with both gospel writers when he writes:

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. – Mk 1:4

Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that John was the voice crying out in the wilderness.

Observe also that John prepared the way for the Lord and made His path straight. John's proclamation of a baptism of repentance was part of that preparation. He called people to be ready for the promised Messiah by repenting of their sins, being restored in their faith, and walking with Him. When Jesus did appear, John introduced Him to the world as the Lamb of God who would take away their sins by dying as a sacrifice on our behalf.

Verse 5

Isaiah prophesied that a “voice” would cry out in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Lord and making His paths straight. This was the work of John the Baptist as he prepared the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world. Isaiah details here what it means to make the path of the Lord straight.

First, to make a path straight is to fill in the valleys. The word Isaiah uses in the original Hebrew, translated here as “fill,” is נָשָׂא (nāśā), which means to lift up. A valley is a low point between the mountains. It is as if the mountains are sagging and do not have the strength to hold up their middle. I suppose we can all identify with what Isaiah is telling us here. Each of us has our weaknesses that need to be strengthened. Though we may have our high points and strengths, we need to be aware of our weaknesses as well.

As we prepare for the Lord's return, the call goes out to us to strengthen what is weak and leave no unguarded place in our lives. Lift up the valleys and fill in the gaps and holes.

Second, to make the path straight means to make low the mountains and hills. Pride can be fatal. There are times when we lift ourselves up above God and fail to see our need for Him, His strength, and wisdom. We can take things on without understanding our need for His guidance and blessing. We can think too much of ourselves and our ability. God calls us here to humble ourselves before Him. There is but one Lord and we must submit to Him. There are times when these proud mountains and hills need to be made low so we understand their place.

Third, to make a path straight we need to address the bends and curves. As much as I would like to think that I am focused on the Lord and walking

straight toward Him, I find that I am all too often distracted by the world and its temptations. I wander a little here and there and then return to the path set out for me. These distractions can keep us from being productive and fruitful in the service of the Lord. If you take a moment before the Lord to seek Him on this matter, He will show you the things that keep you from the task He has given you to do.

The crookedness in the path not only comes in distractions but also through sin and compromise. Consider the words of Joshua to his people:

(6) Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, (7) that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods

or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, (8) but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day. – Joshua 23:6-8 ESV

We must set our eyes on the path before us, not looking to the left or the right.

Fourth, if the path is to be straight, the rough place must become level. The word Luke uses here is λῆϊος (leíos). It could also be translated by the word "smooth." The idea is that the bumps are levelled out, and the road has a smooth surface. Have you ever met someone who excuses their roughness by saying that it is just who they are? Admittedly, these rough patches are not like the mountains that need to be made low but they are abrasive and difficult to navigate nonetheless. There are things in my life that some may consider small but they are not

completely in tune with the Spirit of God. It may be an impatience or I may find myself becoming unkind with my words. Whatever those rough patches are, they need to be made smooth. God is calling us to walk in absolute obedience. We are often content with 60% when He is calling us to address all sin, no matter how big or small it might seem to be in our lives.

Can you imagine John the Baptist reflecting on Isaiah's prophecy about his ministry? He was called to challenge his listeners to absolute obedience and faithfulness to God. I can only conclude that those who took this matter seriously, came to the same conclusion –there was no way they could walk in perfect obedience. If they were to be right with God, they needed a Saviour.

Verse 6

Luke concludes Isaiah's prophecy here by pointing his readers to the purpose of John's work. He prepared the way for the Lord. Who was this Lord? He was the salvation of God. This thought comes in striking contrast to Isaiah's challenge to make every path straight, fill in the valleys, level out the mountains, straighten the crooked paths and smooth out the rough patches. We can do all of this and still need a Saviour. This Saviour and Lord came in the person of Jesus Christ.

Note that Isaiah tells us that all flesh would see this salvation. To see the salvation of God is one thing. To experience it and be saved is quite another. Jesus came to reveal His salvation to all flesh. He came as a light in a dark world. Consider what John has to say about the salvation Jesus offered, however:

(4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men... (9) The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. – John 1:4,9-13 ESV

While not everyone accepts this light of salvation, Jesus promised that every nation would hear about it before He returned:

(14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all

nations, and then the end will come. – Matthew 24:14 ESV

The good news about the Christ John announced, would move from one nation to another until all flesh and people of every nation heard of the salvation of God.

Verse 7

Notice how crowds came to see and hear John the Baptist. We are not told what it was that drew them. Obviously, however, they understood him to be a prophet, and they were interested in what he had to say. John spoke of the Messiah and this was something every Jew longed to see.

Observe here that the crowds came to be baptized by John. Listen to what Luke 3:3 tells us about John's message:

(3) And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. - Luke 3:3 ESV

John preached about the Messiah and challenged those who heard him to be baptized as a sign of their repentance and readiness to receive this promised Messiah. Those who heard John preach, however, were not always sincere. They wanted the Messiah and all he had to offer but were not so willing to turn from their sins and submit to His purpose. John understood this and rebuked the hypocrisy of those who came to him to be baptized.

Here, in verse 7, John called those who came to him a brood of vipers. The word translated, "brood" here is γέννημα (génnēma) and is derived from gennáō meaning to give birth. In other words, they were the offspring of poisonous snakes. The idea is that they

were sinful and rebellious against God. John reminds them of the great wrath of God that was going to fall on them for their evil and rebellious ways and, in doing so, reveals that they were unworthy of this baptism he performed.

Verse 8

John challenges the “brood of vipers” who came to him to repent of their sins. The fact that John called them to repentance demonstrated that this was possible. These guilty sinners could escape the “wrath to come” if they turned from their sin. Grace was available to pardon all who did so.

Observe that repentance was not just a change of mind but also a change of lifestyle. John expected that those who repented “bear fruits in keeping with repentance.” True repentance is demonstrated by a change of behaviour. If I repent and return to my

sin I show that my repentance is not genuine.

Those who came to John had false security. They said: "We have Abraham as our father." In other words, they trusted the fact that they were Jewish descendants of Abraham, the chosen people of God. It is not enough to say: "I belong to such and such a church." If your life does not demonstrate that you belong to Jesus, then your church membership counts for nothing.

John tells those coming to him that God could raise up children for Abraham from the stones on the river bank. In other words, what made them more worthy of baptizing than the unresponsive stones they walked on as they made their way to hear him preach? They were just as dead to spiritual matters as these stones.

Verse 9

John reminded those who trusted in the fact that they had Abraham as a father, that the axe was laid to the root of the tree. Note that he speaks in the present tense. The judgement of God was not for a future time but had already been pronounced against them. They were guilty before God and under His judgment. Because they did not bear fruit "in keeping with repentance," they would be cut down and thrown in the fire. The sentence had been pronounced and these individuals would be chopped down like unfruitful trees and cast into the eternal flames of hell.

John did not hide from the truth. He proclaimed the harsh reality of sin and its consequences. He was not looking for a following. His heart was to warn people of their sinful ways and the judgment to come.

Verse 10

Evidence of the power of God in John's ministry is revealed here in this verse. John had just called those who came to him a "brood of vipers" who were not producing fruit in keeping with repentance. Those words could have been taken as offensive and insulting. Notice, however, the response of those who heard him preach. They asked: "What then shall we do?" This question reveals two details about the people who came to John that day.

First, it reveals an acceptance of his message. They did not challenge John's assumptions about them. They did not walk away. They stayed and asked the question: "What can we do about this sin and rebellion?" In asking this question they are accepting John's assessment. They confess that they are indeed sinners under the wrath of God and in need of repentance.

Second, the question reveals a desire to change and be made right. They knew

that they were under the judgment of God and wanted to make things right with Him. They come to John asking him how they could escape this wrath to come. They wanted to be free from God's judgment.

Verse 11

John answers those who asked him what they needed to do to escape the wrath of God. He responds in a very practical way. Whoever had two tunics was to share with the one who had none. Those who had food to eat were to share with those who were hungry.

The apostle Paul was asked a similar question in Acts 16 by the Philippian jailor:

(30) Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" – Acts 16:30 ESV

Paul's answer was quite different from John's:

(31) And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." – Acts 16:31 ESV

John's answer was to tell the people to do good to their neighbours. Paul tells them to believe in the Lord Jesus. It is important to understand that John and Paul lived in two different times. John was introducing Jesus as the Old Testament Messiah but did not have the advantage of hearing Jesus' teaching. Paul, on the other hand, had a much deeper understanding of the salvation Jesus came to bring.

What is interesting to note about John's answer, however, is that it does not focus on Old Testament sacrifices and rituals but on a heart that is moved by God to love. This was radical for that

time. He is telling the people that what counted was not that they were descendants of Abraham and offered sacrifices to God but that they repented and walked in obedience and love for their Creator.

Verse 12

Various kinds of people came to be baptized by John. Among them were tax collectors. These individuals were hated by the general population. They collected taxes for Rome, who was an unwelcome conqueror. Beyond this, however, was the fact that they were to submit the amount Rome demanded but also made their living by taking more than Rome required and keeping it for themselves. These tax collectors were among those who came to hear John preach. As they stood before him contemplating baptism, they too were compelled to ask: "Teacher, what shall

we do?" The Spirit of God was moving among the people who came to hear John. He was convicting them of sin and challenging them to consider their ways.

Verse 13

John's response to the tax collectors was to tell them not to collect more than they were authorized to collect. In other words, they were not to defraud people and enrich themselves by taking more than required.

Verse 14

Soldiers were also present listening to John, When they asked him what they were to do to be spared from the wrath of God, John told them:

"Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation,

and be content with your wages.”

These soldiers were not always well paid. They would, from time to time, misuse their authority to get money from people. At other times they would falsely accuse them in an attempt to pervert justice or to enrich themselves. John does not hold back here. He reminded the soldiers of what they were doing and called them to repent and learn to be content with their wages.

Verse 15

John's preaching was quite powerful. Crowds were gathering to hear him and the Spirit of God seemed to be working through his preaching and calling people to repent. There was an air of expectation all around as people's hearts were being touched by John's ministry. All of this seemed to get

people wondering if John might be the Messiah.

There is a temptation for all who know the blessing of God in their ministry for people to focus on them and think more highly of them than they ought.

Verse 16

John the Baptist responds here to the question of whether he was the Christ who was to come. His answer comes in two parts.

First, John compares himself to Christ. He tells his listeners that Christ was mightier than him. Compared to Christ, he was weak and insignificant. John told them that he was unworthy to stoop down and untie Christ's sandals. This responsibility was usually given to the servant of the household, who would bend down, untie their master's sandals, and wash their feet. John did not feel worthy of even doing this.

Second, John compares the ministry of Christ to his own. He baptized with water but Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. That fire would consume their sin and the Spirit of God would give them life and empower them to live a godly life.

In John's mind, there was no comparison between his ministry, as powerful as it was in those days, and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Verse 17

John goes on to describe the ministry of Jesus Christ more fully. He tells his listeners that Christ would come with a winnowing fork in His hand. The word used here for winnowing fork is πτύον (ptúon) which refers either to a fan or a shovel used to toss grain into the wind to remove the chaff. The lighter chaff would blow away while the grain fell to the ground.

Notice why Christ came with a winnowing fork. He intended to clear up His threshing floor. The threshing floor was where the grain would fall when it was tossed into the air to separate the chaff. The circulating chaff needed to be removed from these floors and burned in a fire.

The winnowing fork is a symbol of judgment. The threshing floor could be compared to this earth filled with the righteous and the ungodly. The righteous grain needed to be separated from the ungodly chaff. Once separated, this ungodly chaff would then be cast into God's "unquenchable fire" of judgment.

According to John, Christ would come to bring judgment and to draw out a people called by His name to walk in His purpose.

Verse 18

We see from this section the type of preacher John proved to be. He spoke boldly of sin and the judgement to come, and called people to repent and turn to Christ. According to Luke, John preached “good news.” Notice, however, that this good news came in the context of first helping them understand their need. The good news John preached, was pardon and forgiveness for sin and rebellion.

It is hard to understand good news if we do not first understand the bad. The bad news is that we are sinners destined for eternal separation from God. This sets the stage for the wonderful news of pardon and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. All too often we fail to help people fully appreciate the good news of the gospel because we fail to tell them about their sin.

Verse 19

John was so bold in his preaching and renunciation of sin that he was willing to reprove even those in high positions for their evil deeds. Such was the case for Herod the Tetrarch. A tetrarch was a governor of one of four divisions in the Roman Empire. He was a very important man with a lot of political power and influence.

Luke tells us that a situation arose between Herod and his brother's wife Herodias. Herod had an affair with her and ultimately took her as his wife. John rebuked Herod for this and declared that what he did was evil. This declaration would ultimately lead to John's death by beheading (see Matthew 14:3-12).

Verse 20

John's denunciation of Herod's illegitimate relationship with his brother's wife did not go over well with

the Tetrarch. According to Luke, Herod had John locked up in prison for his words.

Sometimes the ways of the Lord are confusing to us mortals. We have a case here where John preached the truth and renounced sin but was imprisoned for it, no longer able to minister. He would ultimately be beheaded for preaching this truth. We are in the midst of a great spiritual battle for the souls of humankind. Understand, however, that John had accomplished his mission. He was given the time to preach and announce Christ to the world before he was killed. The enemy did not win this battle by imprisoning John. God saw fit that he accomplished his purpose before he was removed.

Verse 21

While Luke does not go into much detail here, one day, when John was baptizing, Jesus appeared before him and requested to be baptized. We understand from other gospel accounts that John initially did not feel worthy of baptizing Jesus, but upon Jesus' insistence, he did so. Notice what took place when John baptized Jesus. Luke tells us that the heavens were opened.

Many people had been baptized by John before Jesus, but never once were the heavens opened for them. There was something different about the baptism of Jesus that spoke to everyone witnessing it. Jesus' baptism was a declaration of God's approval of His Son as the Christ.

Verse 22

Notice what took place when the heavens opened at Jesus' baptism.

First, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form. This was not generally how the Spirit of God descended. The Holy Spirit does not have a physical body, but in this case, seemed to take on a form that was recognized by the people present. This was the goal. God wanted to show those present that His Son was empowered and anointed by the Holy Spirit for the mission before Him. The form the Spirit took was that of a dove.

Second, a voice came from heaven for all to hear. That voice was the voice of God declaring Jesus as His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. God the Spirit descended on the Son and God the Father declared His approval of His person and work.

We see from this that Jesus' baptism was a public ordination into ministry. At that time, He was anointed by God the Spirit and confirmed by the Father to a task that He had been given.

Verse 23

Luke tells us that when Jesus began His ministry, He was thirty years old. Priests would enter their service at the age of thirty. We see this in Numbers 4:46-47:

(46) All those who were listed of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chiefs of Israel listed, by their clans and their fathers' houses, (47) from thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone who could come to do the service of ministry and the service of bearing burdens in the tent of meeting, – Numbers 4:46-47 ESV

While Jesus was not a Levitical priest, there may be some significance in Him beginning His ministry at this age.

Note also the words: "being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli." Luke has been clear in his

account of the birth of Jesus that Joseph was not His biological father. The words “as was supposed,” however, show that the average person made this assumption. Most people saw Joseph as Jesus’ father though those who understood what had taken place with Mary knew better.

Verse 24

Luke now proceeds to show the genealogy of Jesus from Joseph to Adam. He says nothing about these individuals but simply records their names. We were introduced in verse 23 to Jesus, Joseph and Heli (the father of Joseph). Here, in verse 24, Luke takes us back another five generations to another Joseph, the ancestor of Matthat, Levi, Melchi, and Jannai.

Verse 25

Going back nine to thirteen generations from Jesus we meet Mattathias, Amos, Nahum, Esli and Naggai.

Verse 26

The male heads in generations 14-18 from Jesus were Maath, Mattathias, Semein, Josech and Joda.

Verse 27

In generations 19-23 we meet Joanan, Rhesa, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel, and Neri. The story of Zerubbabel is found in Haggai 1, where it tells us that he was the governor of Judah when Israel returned from exile in Babylon.

Verse 28

Melchi, Addi, Cosam, Elmadam and Er lived at least 24-28 generations before

Jesus and they were the heads of their families.

Verse 29

Joshua, Eliezer, Jorim, Matthat and Levi are listed as the heads of generations 29-33.

Verse 30

Simeon, Judah, Joseph, Jonam and Eliakim are next on the list and go back 34-38 generations from Jesus.

Verse 31

With the names Melea, Menna, Mattathaa, Nathan and David we arrive at the time of King David of Israel, 39-43 generations prior to the arrival of Christ. We begin now to get a sense of just how long the people of God waited for the Messiah to come.

Verse 32

King David's father and his ancestors are given here. Jesse, Obed, Boaz (in the days of Ruth), Sala and Nahshon are listed as generations 44-48 before the coming of Christ.

Verse 33

Amminadab, Admin, Arni, Hezron, Perez and Judah are next on this genealogical record, and are generations 49-53 in this list.

Verse 34

With generations 54-58, we are now back to the days of Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Terah and Nahor, recorded in the book of Genesis. Many genealogical records were concerned with tracing the nation back to Abraham who was considered the father of the Jewish

nation. Luke, however, goes further than this and continues to trace the genealogical record. His concern is not just to identify Jesus as a Jew but as the Son of God.

Verse 35

Generations 59-63 include the names of Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber and Shelah.

Verse 36

In generations 64-68, we come to the days of Noah. Cainan, Arphaxad, Shem, Noah and Lamech were the family heads these days.

Verse 37

Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahalaleel and Cainan are listed as generations 69-73 from the time of Jesus.

Verse 38

Finally, we have the names of Enos, Seth and Adam, the first man on the list in generations 74-76. Note, however, that Luke does not stop at Adam. He adds a 77th name to this list. Adam was the son of God. God was the source of all this family. This God had no father but was the eternal creator of the world as we know it. Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus right back to God.

Luke's concern is not to show people that Jesus was a Jew but that He was the Son of God. He came not just for the Jewish nation but for the whole world. He identified with us all, regardless of race.

LUKE 4

Verse 1

Jesus is ready to begin His ministry. Note, however, that He did not begin until after His baptism. What is of particular significance about this is that it was at that time that the Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The Spirit anointed Christ and empowered Him for ministry at His baptism. Jesus would exercise His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit and under His leadership. Luke begins verse 1, therefore, with the words, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit." Jesus did not minister in His strength alone. He

was at one with the Spirit and the Father in everything He did.

Note that Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. As the Son of God, He both submitted to and expected this guidance. In this case, the Holy Spirit directed Jesus into a barren, desolate and lonely place.

When it comes to the leading of the Spirit, we do not get to pick and choose the direction we want to follow. We follow even when it leads us to these desolate and lonely places. The Spirit of God must have our absolute obedience.

Verse 2

For forty days Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. This is where the Spirit of God led Jesus. It was the purpose of God that Jesus be tempted. Understand that it was not His purpose, however, that Jesus submit to those temptations. You can

be sure that the Spirit who led Jesus into this place would also empower Him to overcome each trial sent His way.

Luke tells us that during those forty days, Jesus had nothing to eat. He was hungry and His physical body was in a weakened condition after that time. Consider this for a moment. If you knew you had a moment of intense effort ahead of you, would you not prepare yourself by eating a good meal? That, of course, would be true if the effort was physical or mental. In Jesus' case, however, it was His soul that was being tempted. Jesus was engaged in a spiritual battle. While physical food may benefit the body and mind, it does not have the same impact on our soul. The strength of our soul is not in physical food but in spiritual. We can be assured that during those forty days, his soul was being amply fed as He communed with His Father and found strength in the Spirit.

Verse 3

It was when Jesus was in this weakened physical and mental state that the devil decided to attack Him. Note first how the devil, addresses this weakened condition by telling Jesus to command that the stones in the desert be changed to bread. Understand that there was nothing wrong with Jesus changing stones into bread. Later in His ministry, He would change water into wine. We can be sure that Satan is not speaking to Jesus out of compassion and mercy. There is a very subtle purpose in His mind to distract Jesus from the purpose of the Father.

Consider the statement of Satan more closely. Note the words, "If you are the Son of God." This is the basis for the question and any action Jesus might take. Satan is not concerned about Jesus' hunger; It would be to his advantage if Jesus died of hunger in

the wilderness. Satan is challenging Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God.

Consider those forty days of isolation and struggle in the wilderness. Luke tells us that he was tempted by the devil in those days. He had just been baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of God. This leads Him to isolation, barrenness, physical hunger and intense demonic oppression and temptation. Where was the Father in this? Where was the blessing of God? Where were the masses of people accepting Him as the Messiah? In the midst of all this, Satan comes to Jesus and says, "Are you really the Son of God? Is this how a father treats his son? Is this what is in store for you? How can you say you are really the Son of God when this has been your lot these forty days? You sat in heaven beside the Father but now look at you. You're rejected and abandoned." It is in

this context that Jesus' faith is tested. Did He trust the leading of the Spirit? Would these circumstances make Him waver in His faith and knowledge of who He was? Would He feel the need to listen to Satan and prove to Himself that He was the Son of God by some miracle?

Verse 4

Note Jesus' response to Satan. Turning to the Word of God, He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone." The passage in Deuteronomy goes on to say: "but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

Jesus resists Satan by turning to the Word of God. He reminds Him that circumstances do not dictate truth. God's Word is a reliable and authoritative guide in all matters. This is what He clung to in times of

barrenness, isolation and loneliness. Yes, His hunger was real. Yes, those forty days were brutal. God's sovereign Word, however, would never change. The Word of the Father was sufficient for Him.

Verse 5

Luke tells us that the devil next "took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

The word translated as "took Him up" is ἀνάγω (anágō). It is derived from aná, meaning up, and ágō, meaning to bring or to lead. Together these words carry the sense of leading someone up. The Textus Receptus texts (the foundation for the translation of the King James Version) tell us that the devil took Jesus up to a mountain.

What is particularly interesting in this verse is that the devil then showed

Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.” The question we need to ask here is this: How did the devil show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time? There is no mountain on earth from which you can physically see every nation.

In our day of internet connectivity, it might be possible to catch a glimpse of every nation on a computer screen if we were tied to a live feed.

Understand, however, that this was not a reality in those days. To see every nation on the earth in a moment requires spiritual vision. Something greater than human vision is in place here. Satan and Christ are speaking on a different level and seeing things that are not visible to the human eye.

Verse 6

With the vision of every nation on the earth before them, Satan then made a commitment to the Lord Jesus. He told Him that he had the right to give both

the authority and glory of all these nations to Him and that he would do so on one condition. He will state that condition in the next verse. For now, consider three very important facts.

First, Satan tells Jesus that all the nations of the earth have been delivered over to him. When did this happen? It all began in the Garden of Eden when our first parents rebelled against God. At that time, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and submitted to Satan and his temptation. Sin ravaged their souls, minds and bodies as a result. It spread, like a cancer, from one generation to another, separating humankind from God and His purpose. Sin was the dominion of Satan. He was absolute lord and master over every sinner. He held their destinies in his hands and used them to accomplish his evil purposes on earth. All of this would end up in eternal separation from God. The world as we know it was delivered

over to Satan as its lord and master through sin and rebellion against God.

Second, Satan tells Jesus that authority had been delivered to him and he had the right to give it to whomever he pleased. The word Satan uses here in the Greek language is ἐξουσία (exousía). It speaks about permission, liberty or power. In other words, Satan has been given permission, liberty and power over this world. That permission and legal right came when we chose to rebel against God. Sin is the power Satan has over us, the prison cell in which he keeps us, the control he has over our destiny, the language our sinful hearts understand, and the darkness that blinds our eyes. As long as sin is in the picture, he has absolute authority over us.

Third, Satan tells Jesus that he has the glory of the nations at his disposal.

"Their glory... has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will."

Consider the nature of this worldly glory. How many powerful leaders in history have been the tools of Satan to promote his evil agenda? How many famous entertainers and movie stars have pushed his evil philosophy? How many men and women have sold their souls for great riches and ease? These individuals are powerful, famous, influential and rich in the eyes of this world. They have everything they want in life. But all of this comes at a cost. Listen to what Jesus had to say about this in Mark 8:

(35) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (36) For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? – Mark 8:35-36 ESV

To obtain the glory of this world has cost many their eternal soul.

Yes, Satan has been given authority and worldly glory to give to whomever he pleases. To obtain it, however, you must sacrifice your soul to eternal hell. Satan offers Jesus this authority and glory.

Verse 7

In verse 6, Satan offers to give up his authority and release all the world's glory to Jesus on one condition. He states that condition here – "If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Consider this offer for a moment.

What would all the glory of the world accomplish? Worldly fame, riches and influence would not achieve the purpose of God. The Lord Jesus could have been born in a famous family with riches and influence but He shunned

that and chose the simple home of Mary and Joseph. His desire was not to be rich and famous. God had a much greater purpose for His Son than this.

What about the authority Satan offered Him? It was not authority over a dominion of sin that Jesus sought. His kingdom was not of this world. His was a kingdom of righteousness and victory over darkness not authority in darkness. Christ had no interest in worldly glory and authority over a sinful kingdom.

More important was the fact that if Jesus sinned by worshipping the devil, then all hope of salvation would have disappeared. He was the only spotless lamb. There was no other sacrifice that could have been made to cover the sins of the world. If He failed His mission, the world would have been lost. Satan would have become the undisputed ruler over this world, and we would

have been eternally separated from God.

Verse 8

Jesus responds to Satan's second temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy 5:13:

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

Once again, Jesus is guided by the Word of God. He commits Himself to absolute obedience and faithfulness to His Father's will. He would not worship Satan. He shunned everything this world had to offer – its glory and its authority, to be faithful to His Father and His purpose for His life.

Verse 9

In this final recorded temptation, Satan takes Jesus to Jerusalem and sets him on the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle of the temple was likely the highest point in Jerusalem. Notice the words of Satan here:

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here."

Satan challenges Jesus to prove Himself. There is no question that Satan knew that Jesus was the Son of God. In this very chapter, Luke records an incident where evil spirits came out of many declaring Jesus to be the Son of God:

(40) Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. (41) And demons also came out of many,

*crying, "You are the Son of God!"
But he rebuked them and would
not allow them to speak, because
they knew that he was the Christ.
– Luke 4:40-41 ESV*

The words of Satan, "If you are the Son of God," are intended to stir Christ to action. It is a natural response to defend our honour. Satan is seeking to stir Christ to prove himself by doing something so spectacular that it would remove all doubt that He was the Son of God.

Verse 10

Notice how Satan uses Scripture to tempt Jesus. He quotes Psalm 91:11 in this verse. In Psalm 91, the psalmist speaks of how the Lord is his protector and that He would send His angels to guard those who belonged to Him.

What Satan is saying to Jesus is something like this: "The Scriptures say that God keeps those who love Him, and sends His angels to protect them. You, Jesus, declare Yourself to be the Son of God. If this is the case than God would certainly send His angels to protect and keep You. He would not let anything happen to His beloved Son. Show me if that promise of God is true. Prove to me that You are really the Son of God. I want to see those angels come running to your aid as you fall off the pinnacle of the temple."

Verse 11

Satan quotes from Psalm 91:12 where the Psalmist tells us that God protects His own. He recites this verse to Jesus after telling Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. He is asking Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God and that Psalm 91:11-12 is true.

Satan is insinuating that if Psalm 91:11-12 was true, Jesus could foolishly jump off the temple, and angels would come rushing to His aid, catching Him on the way down so He didn't get hurt. This, according to Satan, would prove that Jesus was the Son of God.

I have seen this satanic reasoning before. I have heard people say if God wanted me to stop having an adulterous affair, then He would stop me from doing so. That is like saying, I am going to jump from the pinnacle of the temple and expect that if God doesn't want me to do so, He will catch me on the way down. The fact of the matter is this: If you would open your eyes and see the truth of His Word you would not have jumped because God has already made this matter clear. If you jump, you do so in disobedience and disregard for His Word. Many have hit rock bottom and ended up in despair because they have foolishly

jumped when God's Word was asking them to remain firm.

Verse 12

Jesus responds to the temptation of Satan with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:16: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

Imagine that you were caught doing something wrong and brought before a judge. The judge finds you guilty, but because it was your first offence, he lets you off with a warning.

What would happen if you left that courtroom and immediately went out and did the same thing again? Would you not test the patience of that judge? When you stand before him a second time, you can be sure it will not go as well for you as it did the first. To test God is to disrespect His patience and compassion and misuse or dishonour His mercy and grace.

By foolishly jumping off the pinnacle of the temple Jesus would have been misusing the grace of God to save Himself from harm. In my country, we have a number we dial when there is a medical or criminal emergency. To use that emergency number foolishly or for anything other than a genuine emergency is a punishable offence.

We all know that God is a compassionate and merciful God. There is comfort and support for all who need it. We must, however, take these characteristics seriously. To joke, manipulate or take these qualities for granted is a serious offence. Some people believe they deserve God's mercy and grace. This is not true. God is not obligated to extend His hand to any one of us. Grace, by definition, is unmerited or undeserved favour.

We are to live our lives taking care of what God has given us. We are to walk sensibly and honourably in all we do.

We are to respect God, our bodies, our neighbours, and the environment around us. God is not our servant. It is not His obligation to clean up our mess when we disobey and fall short of His standard. When we jump foolishly off the pinnacle of the temple, outside of His purpose, to prove a point, He is under no obligation to pick up the pieces when we hit rock bottom. If anything, we will need to confess our foolish disrespect and sin and fall upon His undeserved favour for pardon.

Verse 13

The time came when Satan could do no more. The test was over and Jesus had conquered every trial and temptation thrown at Him. Luke tells us that Satan left the presence of Jesus.

Note, that while Satan left the presence of Jesus, he did not give up. Luke tells us that he “departed from him until an

opportune time.” Satan was watching for every opportunity in the life of Jesus to infiltrate and cause disturbance. We see this in the hatred and jealousy of the religious leaders who sought to kill Him. He shows up in the life of Judas who betrayed Jesus. He influenced Peter to deny his Lord. Most of all, we see it in the bitter crucifixion and cruel death of our Lord.

Verse 14

When Jesus’ temptation was over, Luke tells us that He returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit.” Observe here that the Lord Jesus trusted and walked in the power of the Spirit. This was the power that moved and enabled Jesus. He chose to draw from this divine source rather than an earthly strength. Notice what took place as a result:

"A report about him went out through all the surrounding country."

The ministry of Jesus demonstrated that God was moving through Him. People could not help but notice this. What Jesus did could not be explained by any human strength. What He preached was not from any worldly wisdom. People took note and began to share it with others.

Verse 15

Luke tells us that Jesus would go to the synagogues and teach there. There was freedom for visitors to speak in these centres of worship.

Note the response of the people to His teaching. He was "glorified by all." The word glorified is δoξάζω (doxázō) and refers to recognition, praise or honour. In other words, the people recognized

Him and His teaching and held Him in high regard.

Verse 16

One of the first places Jesus would minister was in Nazareth, where he had grown up. Note that, as a Jew, he attended synagogue on the Sabbath. On this particular occasion, Jesus was given the scroll to read a passage from Scripture.

The synagogue in Nazareth was familiar to Him. This is likely where he and his family attended every Sabbath. The people present knew Him and His family.

Verse 17

During the service at the synagogue, there would be various readings. This reading was from the prophets and a scroll containing the words of Isaiah

was handed to Jesus to read. Jesus took the scroll, unrolled it until He found a particular portion and began to read.

Verse 18

The passage Jesus read that day was from Isaiah 61:1-2. In this section of his prophecy, Isaiah declared a time of great prosperity for the people of God (Isaiah 60). This would be a time when ancient ruins would be rebuilt (Isaiah 61:4), and the salvation of God would appear (Isaiah 62:11). The portion of this prophecy Jesus read declared that the Spirit of God had come upon His servant and anointed him to proclaim a five-fold message. Luke gives us four of the five prophetic announcements here in this verse.

First, good news would be announced to the poor.

Second, liberty was proclaimed to those who were held in captivity.

Third, the blind would recover their sight.

Fourth, a declaration of liberty was pronounced to the oppressed.

It is not hard to see how Jesus fulfilled these first four declarations. He healed the blind and brought hope to the oppressed, captive and poor. He cared for them and demonstrated compassion and mercy toward them. Beyond this, however, we also see how Jesus ministered to the spiritually oppressed. He set them free from demons and falsehood. He opened the spiritual eyes of the blind. He set those captive to sin, free, through the forgiveness He brought on the cross. Those who were spiritually poor and destitute were made children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Verse 19

The final prophetic declaration of Isaiah 61:1-2 was a proclamation of the year of the Lord's favour. We can see how the return of God's people from exile would have been a powerful fulfillment of that wonderful word of Isaiah.

Understand, however, that many prophecies of the Old Testament have multiple fulfillments. The release of God's people from Egypt or Babylon was a picture of another release. The favour shown to God's people in those days pictured an even greater day of favour to come. Jesus came to proclaim a day of salvation better than release from Babylon or Egypt. He came to announce release from the curse of sin and its consequences. He came to declare the forgiveness and salvation of God.

Verse 20

Having read the portion of Isaiah, Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. In our modern Christian churches, the act of sitting down indicates that we have completed what we were doing. This is not the case here. A teacher in that culture would sit down to teach. Note what Luke tells us happened when Jesus sat down:

"And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him."

By sitting down, Jesus indicated that he had something to say. Everyone then turned to listen to His word.

Verse 21

With every eye fixed on Him, Jesus declared that the prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled in their hearing. The words were very bold, but it is unclear

how much those sitting in the synagogue understood their meaning.

It would certainly have been good news to hear that the year of God's favour had come. Who wouldn't want to have good news proclaimed to the poor, liberty announced to the captive, blind people healed and the oppressed released from their burden?

Jesus, however, was declaring something much deeper than this that day. He was declaring that He was the one prophesied to bring this year of God's favour. He was the Messiah and ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic word. Those present were hearing the voice of the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah.

Verse 22

Note the response of the worshippers in the synagogue to the words of Jesus.

First, they spoke well of Him. In this context, they seem to appreciate the words He shared.

Second, they marveled at the gracious words coming from His mouth. The word χάρις (cháris), translated as gracious, speaks of favour, kindness or compassion. Grace is a quality of God. The words of Jesus appear to reflect this quality as He spoke. The presence of God was evident in Jesus' instruction. This seems to strike the people who heard him speak.

Third, those present in the synagogue asked the question: "Is not this Joseph's son?" They were surprised by the fact that someone so simple, who lived among them, could have spoken with such grace. This would prove to be a stumbling block for the citizens of Nazareth. They could not understand how God could use one of them to be His servant. Their concept of what God

could do among their own was very limited.

Verse 23

The people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, wondered how a son of Joseph could speak with such grace. They could not believe that anyone from Nazareth could amount to anything, especially if they came from a poor family like that of Mary and Joseph. Note Jesus' response to these individuals.

Jesus quotes a common proverb of the day to His fellow citizens. That proverb went something like this: "Physician, heal yourself." The meaning is quite simple. The doctor was often so busy healing other people that the health of his own family was often ignored. What was Jesus saying to the people of Nazareth that day and what was its connection to the proverb?

It appears that Jesus had been in Capernaum before coming to Nazareth. While there, He had performed some miracles. This was not the case in Nazareth, however. He did not perform any miracles in His hometown.

The people of Nazareth were telling Him that he was like a doctor who healed others while ignoring his own family. He performed miracles for other towns but not for the town where He grew up.

Verse 24

Jesus, understanding the heart of Nazareth toward Him, reminded His fellow citizens that no prophet was accepted in his hometown.

There is an English proverb that says: "Familiarity breeds contempt." In other words, we treat those closest to us with the most disrespect. The people of Nazareth were an example of this

proverb. They couldn't believe that anyone of significance could come from their town. They had watched Jesus grow up among them. How could a little boy from Joseph's family ever become a prophet of God? They were too familiar with Him to accept Him as anything but the son of Joseph the poor carpenter of Nazareth.

Verse 25

Jesus has just told the people of Nazareth that no prophet was accepted in his hometown. He illustrates this with a story from the time of Elijah. In 1 Kings 17, we read how God proclaimed through the prophet that there would not be any rain in the land. Jesus tells us here how that prophetic declaration came true, and for three and a half years, no rain fell on the land. This resulted in the failure of crops and a great famine. As you can imagine,

there was tremendous hardship in those days among the people of God.

Verse 26

Jesus speaks here of the famine that took place during the days of Elijah, as recorded in 1 Kings 17. While there were many widows in the land of Israel suffering in those days, God sent His servant to minister to a widow in the city of Zarephath in Sidon. Elijah was sent to other people and not to his nation. Jesus uses this illustration to show that God does not always send His prophets to their people. Many times, His prophets are better received outside their hometown.

Verse 27

Jesus uses a second illustration to show how God often sends His servants to other nations rather than their people.

This time He reminds the citizens of His hometown of the story of Naaman the Syrian from 2 Kings 5. In that story, God sent Naaman, the military commander, to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. While there were many lepers in Israel, it was this Syrian that God wanted to heal.

These illustrations of Jesus illustrate how important it is to be sensitive to the leading of the Lord. God does not always lead us in ways that make sense to ourselves.

Verse 28

Over the last few verses, Jesus has been speaking directly to the people of Nazareth. He showed that He understood their feelings toward Him. He knew how they struggled to accept Him as a prophet of God when they knew Him as the son of Joseph. He knew they were jealous of the fact that

He had performed miracles in Capernaum and not in Nazareth. He showed them from Scripture how God used both Elijah and Elisha to minister to people outside of their nation.

These words seemed to upset the people of Nazareth. Luke tells us that they were “filled with wrath.” Jesus’ words seemed to rebuke them. They were unwilling to believe His claim to be a prophet of God. It may be that by using the illustrations about Elijah and Elisha, they saw Jesus as placing Himself on the same level as their great saints, something they were unwilling to accept. All of these things made them angry with Him.

Verse 29

Notice the anger in the hearts of the people of Nazareth toward Jesus. They were so furious with His claim and His words, that they rose up in the

synagogue and drove Him out of the town. They didn't want Him or His influence to be in their community anymore. They brought Him to the brow on which the town was built to throw Him off the cliff to His death. This type of murderous hatred has its source in Satan himself. We who are His servants must prepare ourselves for such attacks.

Verse 30

While the people of His hometown wanted to kill Him, this was not His time nor the way Jesus was to die. Luke tells us that He "passed through their midst and went away." We are not given any further details about this. Did He simply walk away from them? Did something miraculous take place? We are not told. Suffice it to say that God had another purpose for His Son and He was kept from this untimely death.

The Father had a purpose and the people of Nazareth would not hinder that purpose. Those same protective hands will be upon us as we walk in obedience to His will.

Verse 31

From Nazareth, Jesus made His way northward to the top of the Sea of Galilee, where Capernaum was located. As he did in Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began teaching the people.

Verse 32

There was something about the teaching of Jesus that astonished the people of Capernaum. The word translated astonish, here is ἐκπλήσσω (kelps'). It speaks of striking with force by a blow or knocking someone senseless. It describes a strong

response from the people who heard Jesus speak. They experienced Him as someone who possessed great spiritual authority in His words.

Verse 33

Present that day in the synagogue was a man who had an unclean spirit. This man appears to be interrupting the service by crying out in a loud voice. It is uncertain why he was in the synagogue. He may be an instrument of Satan to disrupt the worship of God. What is important for us to note, however, is the fact that there was a great need present that day. Here was a man with an unclean spirit needing to be set free.

I have been a pastor in a small rural church for a number of years now. It has never ceased to amaze me how many needs walk through the doors of the building where we meet. Sickness,

pain and brokenness are the norm. Here in the synagogue of Capernaum was a man held hostage by an unclean spirit. This man was in the presence of those who claimed to know the God who could set him free. He was indeed interrupting the worship, but those cries were also cries for help and deliverance.

Verse 34

Notice what the man with the unclean spirit said.

First, the spirit cried, "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Understand here that the demon is speaking. His words are not necessarily a reflection of the heart of those present in the synagogue. The authority of Jesus threatened the efforts of this demon in the man. The power of Jesus' preaching was pushing back the darkness of Satan and this

demon was threatened. You can almost hear him uncomfortably scream, "Leave us alone."

Second, the unclean spirit cried out, "Have you come to destroy us?" The unclean spirit knew that there was hostility between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. This spirit also knows that this man who preached with authority also had authority over them. He had indeed come to destroy the power of the evil one over the souls of men and women. He had come to set them free from their evil domain.

Finally, note that the unclean spirit knew what the people in the synagogue in Capernaum did not know as of yet. This spirit knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God. That is to say, He was the Messiah who was to come to bring pardon, and victory over sin and the kingdom of Satan. It was this fact that brought fear to the unclean spirit. He had authority over the man he

oppressed, but there was one present who was greater than him. This Jesus had authority over even the hosts of hell for He was the Holy One of God.

Note here how the unclean spirit speaks in the plural. It may be that the spirit is speaking of itself and the man he possessed. It is as if the unclean spirit spoke for the man and his destiny was tied to its. Jesus would change this alliance however, the separate the one from the other.

Verse 35

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit when it spoke through the man attending the synagogue. Notice several details here.

First Jesus rebuked this unclean spirit. The word used here is ἐπιτιμάω (epitimáō) which speaks of a strong admonition. Jesus speaks with authority. He can do this because he has power over this demonic spirit.

Second, Jesus told the unclean spirit to be silent. I have heard of cases where individuals hold conversations with evil spirits. Jesus did not do this. He simply silenced them. What these spirits of Satan had to say was not worth listening to. We are not to give them any opportunity to spread their lies and deceit.

Third, Jesus, having compassion for the man, commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him. We see from this that the spirit had been living in that man, speaking through him and likely influencing his way of life. The spirit had to be removed if he was to live a normal life again. Jesus took authority over this spirit and demanded it leave the man's body.

Fourth, the spirit was forced to obey the voice of Jesus. Note that when this spirit left, the man felt something happen in him and he was thrown to the ground as a result.

Finally, Luke tells us that while the man was thrown to the ground when the spirit left, he was not harmed. Luke knew that these unclean spirits had the power to harm. In this case, however, Jesus did not permit this to take place. We see the authority of Jesus over demonic spirits here.

Verse 36

The response of the worshippers in the synagogue was one of amazement. Note that they expressed this amazement by saying, "What is this word?" Luke explains what they meant by this question in the second half of the verse.

Notice the words, "For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" By beginning with the word "for," Luke connects what he says with what had just been spoken by the people. In

other words, Luke is explaining the meaning of the question, "What is this word?" Luke is telling us that, in essence, the people were saying something like this, "What kind of word is this that when He speaks, even the demons are forced to obey?"

Verse 37

What the people saw taking place that day in the synagogue began to spread throughout the community and surrounding regions. The power demonstrated by Jesus over evil spirits was something the people could not keep to themselves. Here was a religious leader who spoke with power and authority. He was not someone who could be ignored.

Verse 38

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus went to Simon's house. Simon would later become more commonly known by the name Peter, the disciple of Jesus.

Observe that Peter was a married man. He owned a home in Capernaum and before becoming a disciple of Jesus, made his living as a fisherman. It appears that Peter's mother-in-law lived with them at this time. The fact that there is no father-in-law mentioned may indicate that she was a widow at this stage in her life and was living with her daughter and Peter, who were caring for her in her senior years.

When Jesus arrived at Peter's home, his mother-in-law was sick with a high fever. Those present appealed to Jesus on her behalf. In other words, they asked Jesus if He would heal her of this fever.

Verse 39

Notice the response of Jesus to the request to heal Peter's mother-in-law.

First, He stood over her. Peter's mother-in-law was likely lying down in bed. Jesus went where she was and stood over her bed.

Second, Jesus rebuked the fever. The word Luke uses here is the same word used in verse 35 when Jesus spoke to the unclean spirit. Jesus spoke with authority and commanded the fever to leave.

Observe that the fever left her immediately. The fever responded to the voice of Jesus, just as the unclean spirit did. Jesus demonstrates His authority not only over unclean spirits but also over disease and sickness.

Having been healed of her fever, Peter's mother-in-law responded by rising from her bed and offering hospitality to

Jesus and His disciples. This was the least she could do in response to her healing.

Verse 40

News about how Jesus healed the man with the unclean spirit, spread throughout the region (see verse 37). By the time the sun was setting that day, those who heard this news had brought sick and diseased friends to Jesus for healing. Luke tells us that He “laid His hands on every one of them,” and they were restored to health. It appears that everyone who came that day experienced the touch of Jesus and went away whole.

Verse 41

Luke recounts how demons came out of many who came to Jesus for healing that evening. We read of cases in

Scripture where demons were the cause of physical afflictions and diseases and by casting out the demon, the affliction was healed.

Luke appears, however, to tell us that demonic affliction was not always the cause of sickness or disease. We see this in how he tells us in verse 40 that "everyone" who came to Jesus was healed. Here in this verse, however, he recounts that demons "came out of many." The use of the word "many," implies that demons did not come out of all. Some were healed without any evidence of demonic oppression.

What is of interest to Luke here is how many of the demons cried out, "You are the Son of God!" Demons of hell declared Him to be the Son of God and fled from Him in terror. These demons had no doubt about who He was and feared His name and His authority.

Notice how Jesus rebuked the unclean spirits and would not allow them to

Speak. Luke tells us that the reason for this was that they knew Him to be the Christ. The question we are left with here is why would Christ silence such a declaration? There may be two reasons for this.

First, everything had its time. A declaration that Jesus was the Christ, would have stirred up the religious leaders and divided the people. In Luke 4:16-30 we see the response of Nazareth to Jesus telling them that He was the prophet spoken of in Isaiah 61. They brought Him to the top of the hill and wanted to cast Him off to His death. It was not time for Jesus to die. It was not His intention to stir up the crowds and divide them over this issue before that time.

Second, the demons of hell were not the ones to declare Him as the Messiah. Jesus wanted nothing to do with the words of demons. Consider this in light

of what Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:14:

(14) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? – 2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV

The ministry of Jesus was separated completely from the darkness of Satan. No demon of hell would announce His presence. No unclean spirit would have any part in His ministry. Jesus pushed every evil spirit of hell away, resisting every temptation, and blocking His ears to anything they had to say.

Verse 42

Luke tells us that “the sun was setting” when people arrived with the sick and diseased that day (see verse 40). We

are not told how long into the night Jesus ministered to the people. Luke tells us, however, that when it was day, He left for a desolate place.

Jesus' intention is very likely to recover from a night of intense ministry. I have often felt deep emotional, spiritual and physical fatigue after a time of ministry. Jesus needed time for rest and refreshment in the presence of the Father. He needed to get away from people and the constant demand.

Jesus intentionally left the ministry to rest and be with His Father. It is easy for us to place ministry at the highest level in our lives. Jesus willingly walked away from opportunities for a higher cause, to rest and be refreshed in His relationship with the Father. Ministry is not our highest calling in life. An intimate and personal relationship with God is a much higher calling.

Note how people continued to seek Jesus. They did not want Him to leave

their community. There were so many needs in this one town that Jesus could have remained there for the rest of His earthly life. Needs, however, do not equal calling. God had a calling on Christ's life that would take Him away from the needs in Capernaum to other towns and cities. Jesus needed to walk in the call of God and not be distracted by the needs of any one community.

Verse 43

To those who wanted Him to remain in Capernaum, Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well."

Note that Jesus went on to tell the people in Capernaum that this was why He had been sent to this earth. Jesus did not remain in this one town because He had been called to preach in other towns as well. The work in Capernaum was not completed, but it

was not the purpose of God for His Son to remain there. He was to announce the good news in many towns of Israel before He laid down His life for them.

If we focus on need, we will miss the call of God. There are needs everywhere. We must learn instead to discern the purpose of God for our lives and walk in it.

Verse 44

The verse tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Judea. There is some confusion here in the original Greek manuscripts from which this verse is translated. A note in the English Standard Version indicates that some early Greek manuscripts use the word Galilee instead of Judea.

Galilee was in the northern part of Israel in the region of the Sea of Galilee. The Jordan River flowed from

the Sea of Galilee toward the south into the Dead Sea where Judea was located.

The King James Version of the Bible tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Galilee and not Judea as translated in more modern versions. It is generally understood by Bible scholars, based on the evidence of the ancient manuscripts, that the word Luke used was Judea. From the context of the passage, however, this is not so clear.

From Luke 4:31 we understand that Jesus is in the region of "Capernaum, a city of Galilee." Luke then goes on in the next chapter to tell the story of how Jesus began to call His disciples when He was at the Sea of Gennesaret (see Luke 5:1). Gennesaret is the region by the Sea of Galilee and is an alternative name for the Sea of Galilee. The context seems to indicate that Jesus did not leave to go to Judea but remained longer in Galilee. Luke's statement

about Jesus preaching in the synagogues of Judea, therefore, seems to be out of context.

Another issue of concern with the translation of Judea in the ESV is a parallel text in Mark 1. Mark seems to recount the same events with the healing of the man with the unclean spirit (compare Mark 1:21-28 with Luke 4:31-37), and Jesus going to Simon's house and healing his mother-in-law (compare Mark 1:29-31 with Luke 4:38-39). Mark also tells us how many came to Jesus at sundown with the sick and those oppressed by demons (compare Mark 1:32-34 with Luke 4:40-41). Mark even tells us how Jesus went to find a desolate place to pray (compare Mark 1:35 with Luke 4:42). What is significant here is how Mark concludes the section with these words:

(39) And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their

*synagogues and casting out
demons. – Mark 1:39 ESV*

Mark tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues of Galilee. There does not seem to be any question about the location where Jesus preached in Mark's account. Ancient manuscripts agree that the word used in Mark's account is Galilee, not Judea.

While we are not one hundred percent certain which is the right word here, or exactly what Luke is trying to convey, we do understand that Jesus did preach in synagogues in both Judea and Galilee.

LUKE 5

Verse 1

Jesus is still in the region of Galilee. On this occasion, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. Gennesaret was south of Capernaum where He had cast out the demon and healed Simon's mother-in-law. Like Capernaum, it was by the Sea of Galilee. The Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Galilee are likely the same body of water.

Note what Jesus was doing at the lake. The crowd was pressing in on Him to hear the word of God. Jesus not only preached in the synagogues but also wherever He had an opportunity.

Luke tells us that “the crowd was pressing in on him.” This leads us to believe that a large following had gathered. They wanted to know what He had to say and likely also to see Him perform some miracles.

Verse 2

As Jesus stood by the lake with the crowd pressing in on Him, He saw two boats. The boats were likely anchored near the shore. Luke tells us that the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. They had likely come in after a fishing expedition and were preparing their nets for the next day.

Verse 3

Jesus got into one of the boats belonging to Simon. Simon was likely with Jesus in the boat because Luke

says that Jesus told him to take it out a little from the land. Jesus then sat down and began to teach the people.

The act of sitting down to teach was very common in those days. Teachers would generally sit down before their students to teach.

By pushing out into the lake, Jesus was visible to the people and was able to project His voice clearly to those who gathered on the shore to hear Him speak.

Verse 4

Luke does not tell us the subject of Jesus' teaching that day. He has a different purpose in mind. That purpose is to tell us about Simon, the man in the boat with Jesus.

When Jesus finished teaching the crowd, He turned to Peter and told him to take the boat into deeper water

where they could let down his nets for a catch of fish.

While the crowd was important, Jesus' main focus here was on one man. Instead of mingling with the crowd after speaking to them, Jesus left them on the shore to minister to Peter.

Verse 5

Notice the response of Peter to the request to take his boat into deeper water. He informed Jesus that he and his co-workers had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. His hope of catching anything at this time was very small.

While Peter did not have much expectation of catching anything, because Jesus had asked him to go out again, he was willing to do so. There are times when all we can do is be obedient. Faith takes a step even when its expectation is small.

Verse 6

Simon took his boat into deeper waters even though he did not have much expectation of catching fish. Note, however, that when he did this in obedience to the Lord's request, his nets quickly filled with a large number of fish. Luke tells us that his nets actually began to break as a result of the quantity of fish they held.

Simon risked going into deeper waters at the request of Jesus. Those deeper waters may not be in a fishing boat for us, but whatever those deeper waters are, they will stretch us in our faith. Jesus does not ask Simon to have great faith to see this miraculous catch; He simply asks him to be obedient. Faith grows through obedience to the Lord and a willingness to push out into deeper waters at His command.

Verse 7

The catch of fish was so great that day that Simon had to signal to his partners in the other boat to come and help them. Luke tells us that they filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

That catch was not because Simon had great faith. He had small expectations. It was because he pushed out into deeper waters, just as Jesus had told him. It wasn't Simon's skill that found those fish. That was a miracle of Jesus. Every bit of his skill was used, however, in getting those fish to shore. Simon had fished all night without success. When he submitted to the voice of Christ, however, he accomplished more than he could ever have imagined. More will be accomplished through obedience than all our human strength, wisdom, and skill.

Verse 8

As Simon contemplated what had just happened, he knew he was seeing a miracle. That day, overwhelmed by what he saw, he fell down at Jesus' feet crying out: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Let's take a moment to consider what Simon is saying here.

First, note that Simon confesses Jesus as Lord. In saying this, Simon recognized that he was in the presence of someone much greater than him. This had been clearly demonstrated to him by the miraculous catch of fish.

Second, observe that Simon fell down at Jesus' feet. This was an act of deep respect and adoration.

Third, as he bowed before Jesus, Simon understood how sinful he was. He saw Jesus as one with the Father in holiness and sinlessness. He felt ashamed to be in the presence of such a holy and powerful Lord.

Finally, Simon asked Jesus to depart from him. The sense of shame and unworthiness he felt was so powerful he felt unworthy to be in the presence of this Lord.

Simon was broken as he ventured out into deeper waters with the Lord Jesus. Jesus brought him out deeper to speak to Him and reveal His person to Simon. The Spirit of God was working in Simon that day, opening his eyes to the truth about Jesus. He would return to shore a new man.

Verse 9

It was the catch of fish that broke Simon. Jesus spoke to him in a way he understood. In all his years as a fisherman, he had never seen anything like this miraculous catch. He and his fellow fishermen were astonished at what they had taken ashore. This broke Simon. It is uncertain how much Simon

understood about Jesus at this point but he knew enough to trust Him and His preaching and commit his life to what He taught.

Verse 10

With Simon that day were James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were Simon's fishing partners. The context tells us that all three of these men were afraid. This fear came as a result of being in the presence of One who had control over nature. It also came as a result of the fact that they were crude fishermen whose spiritual walk was not likely where it should have been. They felt small and sinful in the presence of Jesus.

Note the response of the Lord to these crude fishermen. He tells them not to be afraid. He had not come to condemn them but to invite them to be His partners in reaching men and women

for the cause of the gospel. He tells them that from that moment on, all three of them would be fishing for the souls of men and women in the cause of Jesus Christ.

The choice of His first three disciples is quite amazing. We see Simon's small faith. He was a man fully aware of his sinfulness. His partners were fearful sinners as well. Jesus doesn't choose His disciples from the well-trained lawyers or teachers of the law. Instead, His followers would be simple untrained fishermen who struggled just to make a living. These fishermen did not have a good grasp on who Jesus was or what he had come to do, but they were willing to follow Him and teachable, and this is what Jesus was looking for.

Verse 11

Simon, James and John were so touched by the miracle of that day that

when they brought their boats to shore they left everything to follow Jesus. This meant leaving their jobs, their equipment, their homes and their family. They willingly and without hesitation abandoned it all.

Verse 12

Luke recounts in this section the story of a man who was healed of leprosy. He introduces the story by telling the reader that it was in “one of the cities.” The name of the city and its location is unknown. The parallel accounts in Matthew 8:1-4, and Mark 1:40-45 do not mention the name of the city either. The closest we can come to identifying the region is in Mark’s account. Mark 1:40-45 is sandwiched between two verses that do give us a location. Mark’s account of this event tells us Jesus was in Galilee:

(39) And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. – Mark 1:39 ESV

Mark then goes on in the very next verse after the account of the leper to say that Jesus returned to Capernaum:

(1) And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. – Mark 2:1 ESV

Mark seems to leave us with the impression that Jesus was still in Galilee close to Capernaum when he met this “man full of leprosy.”

Note that this leper came to Jesus and fell on his face before Him. Observe what he said that day:

“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” – Luke 5:12

The word “will” here is θέλω (Thelon) and means to wish or desire. The leper does not seem to have any doubt that Jesus can heal him. He seems to believe that his healing was totally possible for Jesus. The question in his mind was not about Jesus’ ability but rather His willingness.

I suppose this is the challenge for each of us in our prayers. We know that the Lord can answer our requests but we are not sure if this is His purpose and will for our lives.

Verse 13

Jesus responds to the leper. From verse 12 we understand that the leper was not certain if Jesus wanted to heal him, although he had no doubt that He could if He wished to. In response, “Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him.” We need to understand the importance of these words.

Remember that this man was a leper and no one would even approach him because of the uncleanness of his disease. Jesus not only approached him but physically touched him.

Consider what the Law of Moses had to say about leprosy:

(45) "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.'

(46) He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

– Leviticus 13:45-46 ESV

The leper was to identify himself by wearing torn clothes, letting his hair hang loose and wearing a mask over his mouth. He was to cry out to anyone who approached him and say,

“Unclean, unclean.” The leper was to live outside of the camp of Israel in isolation.

According to Leviticus 22:4-6, anyone who touched anything unclean became unclean themselves:

(4) None of the offspring of Aaron who has a leprous disease or a discharge may eat of the holy things until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, (5) and whoever touches a swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or a person from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be-; (6) the person who touches such a thing shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed

his body in water. – Leviticus 22:4-6
ESV

By touching the leper, Jesus did what no other Jewish person would do. They would not risk defiling themselves by touching a leper.

Note also the words of Jesus to the leper: "I will; be clean." Jesus conveys here His willingness to heal this man of leprosy. He was not only able but also willing.

The simple touch of Jesus appears to be sufficient for the man to be healed. Luke tells us that the leprosy left him immediately. We are not told what the indication of this was, but certainly his skin cleared up and there was no more evidence of the disease in his body.

Verse 14

After healing the leper, Jesus told him to go and show himself to the priest

and make an offering for his cleansing. Our Lord pointed the man to the requirements of the Law of Moses and expected him to follow this procedure for his cleansing. Until Jesus died as the final sacrifice for sin, the Law of Moses was still in effect. The man was required to make an offering if he was to be declared clean before God and his community. This declaration would restore him to his family and society again.

Verse 15

News of what Jesus had done for the leper spread throughout the region. This resulted in crowds of people gathering to hear Jesus speak and see Him heal their sick relatives and friends.

Luke tells us particularly that “great crowds gathered.” The idea seems to be that large numbers of people surrounded Jesus in those days. They

appear to be drawn to Him because of the demonstration of His power to heal. They wanted to know who He was and the message He came to bring. I am sure, however, that among them were those whose only desire was to be healed of their sickness and disease.

Verse 16

Luke told us in verse 15 that “great crowds” came to Jesus to hear what He had to say and to be healed of their sickness. Notice that this verse begins with the word “but.” This connects the thought of verse 15 with the words that follow. It shows us Jesus’ response to the large crowds gathering to hear him speak and heal their diseases. Luke informs us that Jesus would withdraw from these crowds and seek out solitude in a desolate place where He could pray.

If Satan cannot keep us from ministry, he may very well overwhelm us with opportunity to the point where we are being controlled by the crowds rather than the purpose of God. The people in that crowd would have been bombarding Jesus with requests and demands. What does Jesus do in this situation? He leaves these human demands and needs and goes to speak with His Father. He needed to hear from Him instead of the crowd. There will always be needs. Not one of us will ever be able to meet all of them. I have personally burnt myself out trying to minister to every request that came my way. Jesus gives us a powerful lesson here. Instead of letting people dictate the shape of your ministry, seek the will of the Father instead.

Verse 17

People from all levels of society came to hear the Lord Jesus speak. On this occasion, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, were listening to Him teach. At this point, it is quite possible that they had not yet made up their mind about our Lord's teaching. He was so popular with the crowd, however, that it would have been important for them, as spiritual leaders, to know what Jesus was teaching.

Note that not only did Jesus draw people from every level of society, but He also drew crowds from "every village of Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem." His fame was quickly spreading and people were coming from near and far to hear His teaching.

Notice one more detail in this verse. Luke tells us that "the power of the Lord was with Him to heal," on that particular occasion. Let's briefly consider this phrase.

First, what does Luke mean by “the power of the Lord?” The Greek word κῦριος (kúrios) speaks of a lord and master. The word is used to refer to the Lord God in the Scripture, although it can be used to speak about a human master as well. Note, in this case, that the word “Lord” is capitalized, inferring respect and honour and leaving no doubt as to the identity of the Lord referred to here. The word Lord refers to God Almighty, the supreme and all-powerful Lord of lords. Luke is telling us that the power of God Almighty was upon the Lord Jesus.

Second, observe that the power of Almighty God was on the Lord Jesus for a particular purpose. That purpose was to heal. When God has a purpose, He empowers His servants for that purpose. The phrase “the power of the Lord was with him to heal,” implies that the Father had a plan for His Son that

day. It was the desire of God to heal someone in the crowd.

Verse 18

When God has a purpose, He will make that purpose known. In this case, some men came to Jesus bringing a paralyzed friend on a bed. Note the phrase, "They were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus." There are two implications here.

First, the men were trying to "bring him in." Jesus appears to be in a building of some kind.

Second, the phrase, "they were seeking to bring him in," implies a level of difficulty in accomplishing that task. Clearly, the crowd was tightly packed, and getting their friend through was nearly impossible.

While it was the will of the Lord God to heal that day, the path to that healing

was difficult.

Verse 19

The men bringing their paralyzed friend to Jesus found that there was no way to get through the crowd to Him. They refused to give up seeking His healing, however. Finding their way to the flat roof of the house, they proceeded to remove the tiles. After making a hole big enough, they lowered their friend down on his bed to where Jesus was. This move required tremendous boldness, perseverance and an unwillingness to let obstacles get in the way. They saw Jesus as the only hope their friend had, and would stop at nothing to place him before the Lord.

Verse 20

Notice Jesus' response to this bold move of the paralytic's friends.

First, Jesus saw their faith. They believed Jesus could heal their friend and chose to overcome every obstacle to get him to the Lord.

Second, when Jesus saw this faith, He responded with the words, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." While his friends came for physical healing, Jesus addressed sin in his life. The word sin in the Greek language is ἁμαρτία (hamartía) and refers to an offence to God. That offence may be in the form of willful or unconscious disobedience. It may also refer to a character or nature that is offensive to a holy God. So for example, the psalmist says this about his nature at birth:

(5) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. – Psalms 51:5 ESV

We speak of someone being born in sin when they were conceived out of

wedlock. This psalm, however, was written by David who was conceived in a loving marriage. The idea, therefore, is that David knew he was born with a sinful nature, even before he had the opportunity to demonstrate this by his choices in life.

Isaiah the prophet speaks of this when he says:

(8) You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel. – Isaiah 48:8 ESV

Sin, then, is either a conscious or unconscious decision that is offensive to God or a state of being that is contrary to Him and His purpose. We are sinners, not just because we sin but because we have a sinful nature.

The effects of sin are seen not only in our separation from God but also in the sickness, diseases and deaths around us. Sin's curse is a curse of sickness, death and eternal separation from God.

As Jesus looked at this man paralyzed in his bed, He understood the curse of sin on his life. There are times when the judgement of God falls upon those who rebel against Him, but even good people who walk faithfully in the ways of the Lord feel the effect of sickness and death.

It is uncertain whether Jesus saw a particular sin in this man's life or whether He was releasing him from the curse of sin in general. The word translated forgive here is ἀφίημι (aphiēmi). It speaks about something being sent away or to be released from the power of something. What Jesus appears to be saying here is that He released this man from the power of sin in His life.

Verse 21

This declaration of release from the power of sin and forgiveness before God, offended the Pharisees present that day. In their mind, there was only one person who could forgive sin, and that was God. For anyone else to declare such forgiveness was blasphemous.

Ultimately, what the Pharisees were saying was true. I can forgive someone else for their sin against me, but ultimately, only God can set us free from the consequences of sin, separation and death.

What the Pharisees did not understand here was the nature of Jesus Christ and His authority. As the Son of God, He had authority over sin and death. It was for this very reason He came. By releasing this paralytic from the consequences of sin in His life, Jesus declared His purpose on this earth. This

was something the religious leaders were unprepared to accept and set them against Jesus and His teaching for the rest of His ministry.

Verse 22

The Pharisees reacted against Jesus' declaration of the paralytic's forgiveness and release from sin and its consequences on his body. It appears that their opposition to Jesus was not public. They likely feared the response of the crowd should they publicly oppose Him.

Note here that Luke tells us that Jesus "perceived their thoughts." This knowledge of their thoughts was yet another indication of Jesus' relationship with the Father. Consider the words of David about God in Psalm 139:

(1) O LORD, you have searched me and known me! (2) You know when

I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. (3) You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. (4) Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. – Psalms 139:1-4 ESV

Who can truly discern thought but God?
Who but God can know the inner workings of the heart?

Jesus demonstrates a knowledge of the hearts and thoughts of the Pharisees and challenges them with the words, “Why do you question in your hearts?” This would have caught these religious leaders off guard and challenged their thinking about Jesus by demonstrating His understanding of very private thoughts they had never expressed publicly.

Verse 23

Responding to the thoughts of their heart, the Lord Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees, says, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" Consider what Jesus is saying here.

The words we use can impact how people respond. You can say the same thing using different words and get totally different responses. Jesus tells the Pharisees that He could have expressed Himself in two different ways here.

First, Jesus could have looked at the paralytic and said, "Rise and walk." What would have been the Pharisees' response to these words? Would they not have marveled at the power of God to heal through Jesus?

Instead of saying, "Rise and walk," however, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven you." In other words, Jesus declared a release from the

consequences of sin on the paralytic's body.

What is the difference between these two statements and its ultimate impact? What was the cause of these consequences on the paralytic's body? It was sin. Both statements would release the man from sin's consequences on his body. "Rise and walk," declared forgiveness and release as well as "Your sins are forgiven." Both statements had the same purpose and would result in the same release.

Verse 24

If both statements of verse 23 had the same meaning, why did Jesus choose the more controversial of the two, knowing that it would cause a reaction among the Pharisees? Luke explains this here in Jesus words, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"

It was the intention of Jesus to convey to the religious leaders that he had the authority to forgive sin. It was time to reveal His purpose for coming to this earth. He came to release us from the power and authority of sin in our lives.

Note that Jesus not only tells the people about his authority over sin, but He also demonstrates that power as He speaks to the paralytic and says, "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." The paralytic's response to these words of Jesus would prove the authenticity of Jesus' declaration to the Pharisees that day.

Verse 25

Note the response of the paralytic to the words of Jesus to rise, pick up his bed and go home. Luke tells us that he immediately rose to his feet, picked up his bed and went home glorifying God.

The response of the paralytic to the words of Jesus confirmed the truth of what Jesus said that day. He had, as the Son of Man, the authority to forgive sin. God confirmed this authority to all those present, by healing this paralytic.

Verse 26

While the Pharisees felt Jesus had committed a sin worthy of death by blaspheming God, the people were seized with amazement. They had never seen such a miracle before.

Note, also how they “glorified God and were filled with awe.” The glory goes to God here. The people understood that it was God who had healed this man through the person of Jesus.

The phrase, “We have seen extraordinary things today,” however, seems to indicate that their attention was focused on the miracle and not so much on the lesson of the miracle.

The Pharisees struggled with Jesus' declaration of forgiveness and His statement about having this authority. Their problem with Jesus was a theological one. On the other hand, the crowd was simply amazed at the miracle and glorified God for practical evidence of His presence among them.

Both responses fall short. The Pharisees could not see the power of the miracle and what it revealed because they were caught up in their particular understanding of theology. On the other hand, the people completely missed the theological implication of the miracle because they were so overwhelmed by the sign itself.

Jesus' declaration and the sign He gave that day were intended to be seen together. The sign backed up the words and was evidence that what Jesus said was true.

Verse 27

Leaving the home where Jesus had healed the paralytic, He and His disciples went out and saw a tax collector sitting at his booth. From the context, we see that Jesus was by the lake of Gennesaret (see Luke 5:1), otherwise known as the Sea of Galilee. It appears that this man had set up a booth somewhere by this lake. It is possible that boats were coming in to offload taxable goods, and this booth was set up there to collect this money. Luke tells us that the collector was a man by the name of Levi.

As they passed by the booth, Jesus spoke to Levi and asked him to follow Him. Understand here that tax collectors were generally despised in the region. They collected tax on behalf of the hated Roman government. Nobody really likes paying taxes, especially to an unwelcomed

conquering nation. People like Levi were agents of this foreign conqueror. Beyond this, however, was the fact that they made their living through the income paid to them. Rome demanded a set amount of taxes but anything over this was for the collector. As a result these men often profited handsomely off the backs of their fellow citizens, some of whom had to struggle deeply just to provide for their basic needs. For Jesus to ask this man to follow Him would have been quite shocking for the disciples who were with Him at the time.

Verse 28

Levi does not seem to question the Lord Jesus when He asks him to follow. Luke tells us that he left everything, rose and followed Jesus. It is uncertain if Levi knew what he was getting into when he left his booth that day. The

fact that he got up and followed Jesus, however, seems to show us that he was willing to make a sacrifice to hear Jesus and consider His teaching.

Verse 29

Jesus and His disciples went to Levi's house. Notice two details about this time.

First, Luke tells us that the tax collector prepared a "great feast." The phrase "great feast" indicates that they dined richly that day. Levi had the resources to provide such a feast. Those riches were obtained very likely from the taxes he collected. Understand, however, that not just anyone would have prepared such a rich feast for Jesus. Levi's willingness to invest much in this meal shows us that he had a deep respect for Jesus and what He stood for.

Second, observe that Levi invited a “large company of tax collectors and others” to the feast he had prepared. Luke specifically tells us that there was a large gathering that day. Those gathered around the table were the most despised people in the nation. Jesus did not hesitate to dine with them.

Verse 30

Note the response of the religious leaders to Jesus dining with tax collectors. Both the Pharisees and scribes grumbled at His disciples. The word translated as grumbled in this verse is γογγύζω (goggúzō) meaning to complain. Their complaint is directed to the disciples of Jesus here. The nature of this concern is seen in the question they asked, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

The religious leaders of the day had a legalistic view of faith. They would not dine with tax collectors who took advantage of others to make a living. They would not associate with anyone who did not live a righteous life. Somehow they believed that this kind of relationship made them guilty by association. In the Old Testament, if someone touched anything unclean, they would become unclean themselves. This appears to be the reason for not associating with sinners. They believed that by eating with them, Jesus and His disciples were taking part in their evil ways. They were making themselves unclean by association or by being with them.

Verse 31

Jesus' differs from the religious leaders of that day in His understanding of righteousness. These leaders believed

that they needed to keep themselves clean on the outside by doing all the right things and keeping away from people who did not walk in obedience to the Law of Moses. Jesus responds to their complaint about Him dining with tax collectors and sinners by telling the Pharisees and scribes that it was the sick who needed a physician not those who were well.

Imagine a doctor unwilling to go near a sick person for fear that they would catch their disease. Imagine a soldier unwilling to go to war because they might get hurt. Imagine a Saviour who refused to approach a sinner to offer them salvation and pardon. Of what use would these people be?

A doctor needs to heal. A Saviour needs to save. They can't do that if they refuse to reach out to those in need. The righteousness Jesus spoke about here was a willingness to reach out to win the lost and to heal the hurting.

Verse 32

Jesus tells the Pharisees and scribes that He had not come to call the righteous to repentance but the sinner.

We need to understand this statement in its context. Quoting from the Psalmist, the apostle Paul tells the Romans:

(10) as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."- Romans 3:10-12 ESV

We know that there is no one apart from Jesus Christ who was truly righteous and apart from Him we would all be under the judgement of God.

When Jesus tells the Pharisees that He did not come to call the righteous to

repentance, He is reminding them that it is the sinner who needs to be reached. He is not saying here that the religious leaders were righteous and the tax collectors were sinners. He is simply telling them that His role, whether it be around a table with the tax collectors or in a discussion with the Pharisees was to call every sinner to repentance and to offer them forgiveness through His work on the cross. He came to this earth because of sinners. He came to reach them with hope and forgiveness. While the Pharisees avoided sinners, Jesus came particularly for them.

Verse 33

The verse begins with the words, "And they said to him." Luke does not give the identity of the people speaking to Jesus here. Matthew, on the other

hand, seems to point to the disciples of John as the ones asking the question:

(14) Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" – Matthew 9:14 ESV

Observe that the question revolves around the practice of praying and fasting. The disciples of John prayed and fasted often. The Pharisees also regularly observed these traditions.

On the other hand, instead of fasting and praying, Jesus and His disciples ate and drank. In the minds of these disciples, there was a big difference between the practice of Jesus and that of the established religion of the day. One was very somber and solemn; the other was joyous and celebratory. These disciples were confused about the faith Jesus presented.

I wonder if the question was really about fasting or was it about the joy they saw in the faith of Jesus and His disciples that was so radically different from the established traditions of the day.

Verse 34

Jesus responds to the question about fasting by using the illustration of a wedding. "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" He asks.

Consider this question for a moment. Who was the bridegroom? Was it not Jesus the promised Messiah who had come to set His bride free from the tyranny of sin and bondage to Satan? As Jesus dined with the tax collectors and sinners in Luke 5:15, He was pleased to announce pardon for all who would come to Him. As He ministered throughout the region of Galilee, He set

men and women free from the bondage of sickness and demonic possession.

Was this the time to afflict themselves and fast? Was this the time to be sorrowful and somber? This was a joyous time. The Lord Jesus was walking on the earth, the kingdom of God was expanding. Satan and his hosts were being pushed back. This was a day of rejoicing and celebration. Those who continued to afflict themselves and grieve were like those who mourned at a wedding. They insulted the bridegroom by not joining in and celebrating His victory.

Verse 35

Jesus was not against fasting. He told His inquirers that when the bridegroom was taken away from them, His disciples would engage in this practice. Notice two details here.

First, Jesus identifies as the bridegroom. This is a very endearing term. He was a bridegroom to His church and disciples. He loved and cared for them as a loving husband would for his wife.

Second, observe the phrase "taken away." The phrase seems to speak of the crucifixion of our Lord and His return to the Father. He was crucified for His bride and left her without His physical presence.

In the days before His departure, Jesus experienced tremendous persecution. He was beaten, mocked and crucified for the faith He taught. His disciples would also endure these trials after He left. They too would be beaten, rejected, imprisoned and killed for the message He gave them to preach. Those days would be days of struggle and turmoil. At that time, His disciples would fast and pray, seeking His

strength and wisdom to endure the opposition set before them.

Verse 36

While the question posed to Jesus was about fasting, it appears that it was deeper than this. The disciples of John the Baptist, as well as the Pharisees, fasted and prayed regularly. Their faith was a somber and solemn one. On the other hand, Jesus and His disciples ate and drank observing a very different lifestyle. The question seems to be as much about the different expressions of faith as it was about fasting. It is in this context that the Lord Jesus told this parable.

The parable was about two garments, an old one and a new one. Imagine that you had an old garment that developed a tear so you buy a new garment, cut a piece from it and use it

to patch the old one. What is the problem with this?

First, why would you destroy a perfectly good garment to patch one that was wearing out? You destroy the new garment by cutting it and patching it onto an old one that will likely not last.

Second, the new unshrunk patch from the new garment, when washed, will shrink and likely tear the worn-out fabric of the old garment, making it worse.

Third, the new patch will not match the faded old garment. It will be obvious to all that the new patch and the old faded garment do not work well together. In the end, you cheapen the old garment by patching it with a new cloth that does not match.

Jesus seems to understand the nature of the question here. He addresses the difference between the faith He preached and the religion of the

Pharisees. The old garment of the Law was incompatible with the faith Jesus proclaimed. You could not trust the law to save you and follow Jesus at that same time.

Verse 37

Jesus uses a second illustration here. This time He speaks about new wine and old wineskins. Wine was kept in containers made from animal hide. This hide, when new, had the ability to expand with the new wine as it fermented. As the skins aged, however, they lost their elasticity and became more brittle. This meant that if new wine was placed in them, it would expand and likely break the old skins causing the wine to leak out and be lost.

Once again, Jesus reveals that the new wine of the faith He preached could not be contained in that old wineskin of the

law. As new wine bursts old wineskins, so faith in Jesus, destroys all confidence in that law to save.

Verse 38

New wine had to be put in new wineskins. The expanding new wine would burst the old wineskin and was completely incompatible with it. What is Jesus teaching here? He is telling us that we cannot trust the law to save us and be His disciple at the same time. We must die to our confidence in the flesh and throw out that old wineskin. Observation of the law will never save you or give you a right relationship with God. Consider what the apostle Paul said about this in Romans 3:20:

20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. – Ro 3:20, ESV

The only thing that the law does, according to Paul is give us a knowledge of how much we need a Saviour.

He went on in Romans 7:4 to say that believers had to die to the way of the law to belong to Christ:

4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. – Ro 7:4, ESV

The law will never save you or give you a right relationship with Christ. Your salvation is not based on how well you observe the requirements of God. That old wineskin of the law must be cast aside if you want to taste the new wine of God's salvation through Jesus Christ and His work alone.

Verse 39

The best wines are usually those that have been aged for some time. Old wine is considered to be much better than new. Jesus plays on this theme in this verse.

Jesus tells us that no one who tastes old wine wants the new. What does this old wine represent? In this context, it is the religion of the Pharisees and scribes. It was the laws and traditions passed down from Abraham and observed for years by the Jewish people.

What was the new wine? It was the faith Jesus taught that could not be contained in those old wineskins. It was a faith that was fermenting and expanding in the hearts of those who received Him and believed in His name.

Jesus seems to be saying that those who were steeped in the old way of the Law did not want anything new. Their

hearts were settled in the traditions of Moses, and they did not want to change. They were content to follow these laws in an attempt to be right with God. They rejected Jesus and the way of faith.

There is something humanly satisfying to think that we can merit our salvation by our good works. The notion that we cannot merit salvation by our own efforts is offensive to many. The idea that we are unworthy of God's grace is often repulsive to us. The individuals Jesus speaks about here rejected the teaching of a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, apart from their own personal efforts. They were content with what they had. They would continue to follow the law, the best they could in an attempt to merit their own salvation. They had no desire for anything new. The old way was good enough for them. This mentality continues to be prevalent today.

LUKE 6

Verse 1

Luke recounts the story of how the disciples were going through a grain field on the Sabbath. As they passed by, they plucked some heads, rubbed them together in their hands to break up the grain and ate. Consider a few details here.

First, notice how the disciples freely take grain from a field that did not belong to them. There was no sin in this. The law of Moses permitted a person to eat freely from any vineyard or grain field as they passed through:

(24) "If you go into your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag. (25) If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain. – Deuteronomy 23:24-25 ESV

Second, the day the disciples passed through the grain field was a Sabbath. The Lord fed the children of Israel with manna as they travelled through the wilderness. They were to gather this food for six days but they were not to go out in search of manna on the Sabbath. No food was gathered on that day:

(29) See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore, on the sixth day, he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his

place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” – Exodus 16:29 ESV

What we see here is the disciples gathering food to eat on the Sabbath day as they pass through the field. It may be that this act of collecting food on the Sabbath was considered inappropriate and a breaking of the Law of Moses.

Third, observe that the disciples also rubbed the heads in their hands to separate the grain from the husk. The fact that Luke particularly mentions this act may show that it was considered to be work and forbidden as a Sabbath activity.

Verse 2

Some Pharisees saw the disciples plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath. They questioned why they

were doing something unlawful on that day.

There is some question as to what particularly the Pharisees found unlawful. It may be the collecting of food on the Sabbath, or possibly rubbing the heads in their hands to harvest the grain. For whatever reason, the Pharisees accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath.

Understand here that this was no light charge. We have an example of what took place to a man accused of breaking the Sabbath in Numbers 15:

(32) While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. (33) And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. (34) They put him in custody because it had not been made clear what should be

done to him. (35) And the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." (36) And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses. – Numbers 15:32-36 ESV

For gathering sticks on the Sabbath, this man was stoned to death. The disciples understood the seriousness of the accusation here.

Verse 3

It was Jesus who responded to the Pharisees and their question about why the disciples had broken the Sabbath law.

Note here the assurance of the Pharisees about their interpretation of

that law from verse 2:

"Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"

These religious leaders are confident in their understanding of the Sabbath law and its application in this particular situation. They were the interpreters of the law and studied it regularly.

In response to their challenge, Jesus gives an example from the Old Testament story of David as recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Here the author relates a time when David was fleeing for his life from King Saul. He and his men left in haste and had no food or weapons for their protection.

It is important to note that Jesus points the Pharisees to the Scriptures they claimed to study. In doing so, Jesus shows them that He was not presenting a foreign doctrine or some new idea.

His authority in His response was the Scriptures themselves.

Verse 4

In the illustration Jesus gave, David and his men, when fleeing from Saul, went to Ahimelech the priest and asked for food. All the priest had available was holy bread that had been set out on the table before the Lord. Assuring himself that David and his men were ceremonially clean, the priest took that bread and gave it to David and his men in their time of need.

The law of Moses was quite specific about this bread. We read the following in Leviticus 24:5-9:

(5) "You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. (6) And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table

*of pure gold before the LORD. (7)
And you shall put pure frankincense
on each pile, that it may go with
the bread as a memorial portion as
a food offering to the LORD. (8)
Every Sabbath day Aaron shall
arrange it before the LORD
regularly; it is from the people of
Israel as a covenant forever. (9)
And it shall be for Aaron and his
sons, and they shall eat it in a holy
place since it is for him a most holy
portion out of the LORD's food
offerings, a perpetual due." –
Leviticus 24:5-9 ESV*

The law stated that this bread was "a most holy portion out of the Lord's food." As holy food, it was to be eaten by Aaron and his sons "in a holy place." It was this holy bread that Ahimilech, the priest gave David and his men as they fled from Saul.

Jesus does not question the “unlawfulness” of what David and his men did that day. They ate bread that was reserved for the priests alone. He does, however, present a biblical example of a case where the rigid interpretation of the law was not taken by Ahimilech, who chose to have compassion on David and his men instead.

Verse 5

In verse 4, Jesus gave an example of a priest who disobeyed the law of Moses to show compassion to David. He moves on here in this verse to make a bold statement – “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

There is no question as to the identity of the Son of Man Jesus speaks about here. Consider what Jesus said in Mark 8:31:

(31) And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. – Mark 8:31 ESV

Jesus, speaking of Himself, tells us that he would be rejected by the religious leaders, killed and rise again on the third day. Speaking to Judas who betrayed Him, Jesus said:

(48) But Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" – Luke 22:48 ESV

Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of Man to Judas.

Jesus told the Pharisees that He had authority over the Sabbath. In other words, His purpose and leading took priority over the law of the Sabbath.

Would there ever be a time when the purpose of God would run contrary to the Law of Moses?

Consider the case of Ahimilech and the holy bread. He believed he needed to give this bread to David out of compassion for Him in his need.

Consider also the response of Jesus to the religious leaders in Matthew 12:

(10) And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"— so that they might accuse him. (11) He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? – Matthew 12:10-11 ESV

Jesus was quite willing to show compassion to a sick man on the Sabbath. He also showed the Pharisees how, on the Sabbath, they would

rescue their sheep if it fell into a pit. While the Sabbath law was intended as a guideline, it did not take priority over the leading of the Lord Jesus and His greater purpose. He was Lord over the Sabbath. There would be times when the harsh and legalistic interpretation of the law needed to give way to compassion and mercy. I am quite willing to break the speed limit sign on the highway if I am trying to save the life of a loved one needing emergency medical care. What kind of person would let someone suffer needlessly on a Sabbath when they had the means to comfort and relieve their affliction in Jesus' name?

The Sabbath was not intended to keep people from doing good. It was not designed to restrict mercy to six days a week. The purpose of Jesus took priority over the rigid interpretation of the law of Moses.

Verse 6

Luke seems interested in communicating the Lord's teaching about the Sabbath. He recounts here a second confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders over this holy day.

On this occasion, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue when a man who had a withered right hand was present. Understand here that this withered hand was not likely a matter of life or death. We are not told how long the man had suffered from this serious inconvenience. It would have been possible for Jesus to meet him the next day and heal him so as not to create a stir among the religious leaders.

Verse 7

The scribes and Pharisees were watching Jesus. They were trying to

find some way of accusing Him of wrongdoing. They wanted to discredit Him before the people.

Luke tells us that on this particular occasion, Jesus was teaching. Consider the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees as they listened to Jesus' words. They wanted to find a reason to accuse Him of falsehood. They were not listening to see what the Lord might have to say to them. Their main concern was to find some fault in Jesus' teaching or actions so that they could diminish Him before the people.

These leaders were particularly watching to see if Jesus would heal the man with the withered hand. Note the motivation for this watching. It was not out of compassion for the man who suffered, but rather to find a means of accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath.

The religious leaders sat in the synagogue with hatred in their heart for

Jesus, a spirit seeking to entrap Him and a total lack of compassion for the suffering of the man with the withered hand.

Verse 8

The attitude of the religious leaders did not escape Jesus. Knowing full well their thoughts, He spoke to the man with the withered hand and asked him to come forward and stand before the gathered crowd.

It would have been easy to avoid a confrontation, especially in a meeting such as this. Something was wrong, however, and Jesus was going to address the matter. The religious leaders were stewing in anger and bitterness toward our Lord. They were leading people into a legalistic faith that had no compassion or genuine holiness of heart. They taught a faith that was about outward appearance but did not

promote true holiness. This was not something Jesus was willing to tolerate in the worship of His Father. The attitude of the religious leaders did not bring glory to God, and Jesus was willing to risk their wrath to speak to them about this.

The man with the withered hand would become a teaching tool. Jesus would use him to convey a very important spiritual lesson, that if the religious leaders did not understand, maybe the average person present would.

Verse 9

Notice how, before healing the man with the withered hand, Jesus asked a question. The question conveys the reason Jesus chose to heal him on that Sabbath day.

Observe the phrase, "And Jesus said to them." We are left wondering who Jesus is addressing here. The context

gives us a clue. Luke tells us in verse 7 that the religious leaders were waiting to see if Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath. Verse 8 tells us that Jesus knew the thoughts of these religious leaders and invited the man with the withered hand to come forward in response. It seems safe to say, therefore, that the question Jesus asks here is directed particularly at these religious leaders.

Note the question: "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" Consider Jesus' question here in light of the words of James 4:17 which says:

(17) So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. – James 4:17 ESV

Listen also to the apostle's words in James 2:15-16:

(15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? – James 2:15-16 ESV

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders in Mark 7:11-13 for avoiding their obligations toward their parents under the pretext of religious tradition and false spirituality:

(11) But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God) — (12) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, (13) thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.' – Mark 7:11-13 ESV

When Jesus told the religious leaders in the synagogue that they had the option of doing right or wrong by this man he was telling them that they could heal him or let him suffer.

In this case, the religious leaders used their religion to escape doing what God had called them to do. They were harming the kingdom for the sake of their laws. They were mistreating and distancing people God had brought into their midst to heal and bless. By leaving this man in his affliction when they could relieve him, they were doing harm.

On the other hand, they could also do good. Doing good in this context related to setting this man free from the effects of the curse of sin on his life.

When given the option on the Sabbath day, either to harm or to do good what would these religious leaders do? To turn from a man suffering on the

Sabbath was to harm. To heal him and set him free on the Sabbath was to do good. They had to make a choice. The Pharisees and scribes chose to let him suffer. Jesus chose to do good.

Verse 10

Luke tells us that after asking the question of verse 9, Jesus then looked around at the people present. We are not told how long He looked at them. Was there an uncomfortable silence as He paused for that moment to examine their response to His question?

Jesus then, speaking to the man with the withered hand, asked him to stretch it out. Consider this for a moment. Luke does not indicate that Jesus touched the man or said anything more. All He does is ask the question, "Is it lawful, on the Sabbath, to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"

When nobody answered the question He asked, it was as if Jesus then placed it in the hands of the Father. It was as if He was saying, "Okay, if nobody has an answer to whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath, let's place the matter in the Father's hands and ask Him about it." He then asked the man to stretch out his withered hand to see what the Father's response would be. Jesus says or does nothing, He just lets the Father respond.

Before those present that day, the Father healed that outstretched hand. He answered the question in a way that no one could deny. Jesus' authority was also confirmed that day as the Father responded through this public miracle.

Verse 11

Observe the response of the religious leaders to the healing of the man with the withered hand. Luke tells us that

they were “filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

A great miracle of God took place that day, but the only response of the leaders was to become furious with Jesus. There is no concern for the man who was healed. No consideration or respect for the powerful presence of God manifested that day. All they could think about was how to deal with Jesus.

Jesus confronted these religious leaders in a way that exposed their hypocrisy and revealed holes in their understanding of Scripture. They were furious with Him for this and saw Him now as their enemy. They were religious people, but they had no sensitivity to the Spirit of God or to what He wanted to teach them through the Lord Jesus.

Verse 12

Luke begins the verse with the words, "In those days." The assumption seems to be that he is speaking about the days after the healing of the man with the withered hand and the furious response of the religious leaders to this miracle. If this is the case, then we see Jesus now seeking a place of isolation where He can be with His Father alone in prayer. Luke specifically tells us that "all night he continued in prayer to God."

We are not told the subject of His prayer. Before going up to the mountain, however, He had seen the hardness of the Pharisee's hearts and their resistance to His message. After leaving the mountain, Jesus proceeded to select twelve disciples. It is likely that both these matters were on His heart that night.

Verse 13

After spending the night in prayer, when the morning came, Jesus called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Understand here there was likely a good number of men and women who followed Jesus wherever He went. These individuals would all have considered themselves His disciples, as they followed after Him and learned from Him. While Jesus had many followers, He selected twelve from among them and gave them a special status and relationship with Him. He chose these twelve to draw nearer to Him. He would work more closely with them and give them a particular responsibility in His kingdom. Luke tells us that Jesus called them apostles. The word ἀπόστολος (apóstólós) simply refers to one who is sent. In this case, they would be sent by Jesus to do a very particular work of establishing His church.

Verse 14

Luke names six of the twelve apostles here. Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. His brother Andrew was also chosen to serve as an apostle. Among those also listed here as apostles are James, John, Philip and Bartholomew.

Verse 15

Four more apostles are listed here. Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot. Note that there are two apostles named James. There are also two apostles named Simon, although Jesus changed one of their names to Peter. The other, Simon, was a Zealot, an anti-Roman revolutionary party functioning in the region at that time.

Verse 16

We have seen that Jesus selected two men named Simon and two men by the name of James to be His disciples. We discover here finally that He also chose two men by the name of Judas. The first Judas was the brother of the first James we met in verse 14. The second Judas was Judas Iscariot who would betray Jesus. The name Iscariot in the Greek language is Ισκαριώτης (Iscariots) and is believed to be derived from the town Kerioth. The name simply identifies the family as being from that region of Judah.

Verse 17

From Luke 12 we discover that Jesus went to a mountain to pray. Likely, some of His disciples were there as well. Luke tells us that after selecting twelve to be His apostles (see verse 13), Jesus “came down with them and stood on a level place.” Observe here

that a “great crowd of his disciples” were present there. These disciples were those who believed in him and likely followed Him wherever He went. They should not be confused, however, with the twelve disciples that Jesus chose on the mountaintop.

Also present on that level plain was a multitude of people from Judea, Jerusalem, and as far away as Tyre and Sidon. These individuals are distinguished from the crowd of Jesus’ disciples, likely because they were not necessarily believers but came because they had heard about Him and how He had been performing miracles. We see how the fame of Jesus has been spreading across the land.

Verse 18

A multitude of people from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon came to hear Jesus and to be healed of their

sickness. In verse 17, Luke distinguished them from the crowd of disciples, likely because they had not yet been convinced about Jesus and His mission. It is possible that some of this multitude would become disciples or followers of Jesus after hearing Him speak and experiencing His miracles.

Note here that while many in this multitude were not yet disciples, Luke tells us that those who were troubled by unclean spirits were cured. We need to understand here that this troubling by unclean spirits was often connected with physical symptoms. People often presented themselves to Jesus with physical ailments, and His response was to cast out an evil spirit, and they would be healed or cured of their disease.

While evil spirits are connected with physical afflictions in Scripture, we should be careful about not seeking an evil spirit in every physical ailment.

Many causes of sickness can be easily cured by natural means and have no connection with an unclean spirit. Note here that Jesus was willing to heal those who had not yet become His disciples. We should see in this our obligation to the unbelievers around us today as well.

Verse 19

Luke tells us that the crowd gathered on the level plain “sought to touch Jesus” because power came out of Him to heal them. Understand two details here.

First, imagine a “great multitude” all gathering around Jesus attempting to touch Him. As I reflect on this I see a certain amount of confusion, pushing, shoving and chaos. I also see Jesus being overwhelmed with desperate people crying out for His touch.

Second, observe how Luke tells us that “power came out from him and he healed them all.” I have had times of intense ministry and come away exhausted. After addressing the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, Elijah came from that event exhausted physically and emotionally (see 1 Kings 19:4-8). I believe Jesus to be the Son of God, but I also know that He dwelt in a human body that was subject to fatigue. I can only imagine how exhausting this time of ministry was for our Lord, as He serve as an instrument of God’s power to bring healing to those who touched Him.

Verse 20

Luke shares briefly some of the highlights of what our Lord taught on that level plain. We begin here with a series of blessings Jesus offers to a select group of people.

Our Lord begins with a blessing on those who are poor. The word used here in the Greek language is πτωχός (patches). It is derived from pots' meaning to crouch or cower. It speaks of a person who is stooped down helplessly. It can refer to one who is destitute of money but also to a humble person or one who suffers affliction in this life. Jesus tells these individuals that the kingdom of God is theirs.

We need to understand that Jesus is not saying that to enter the kingdom of God you just have to suffer in this world. What He is saying, however, is that there is hope for those who are afflicted on this earth. These individuals may be kept from the privileges of high society in this life, but the doors of God's kingdom and eternal life are open to all who will come through His Son Jesus. The power of God's kingdom can set them free from the oppression of

this world and the curse of sin that afflicts them. In fact, those who have little in this world are often more open to the kingdom of God than those whose confidence is in the riches and privileges of this life.

Verse 21

The next blessings are offered to those who are hungry and weep.

Jesus tells those who are hungry that they would be satisfied. Hunger may endure for a time but the satisfaction Jesus offers is eternal. How easy it is for us to focus on the few years we spend on this earth and forget the eternal hope we have through Jesus Christ. What lack do you have now that cannot be multiplied many times over in the age to come? Jesus promises satisfaction to those who lack in this present world. The word used here is χορτάζω (chorda) which speaks of

being filled. This is a picture of absolute contentment and delight. Understand here that the satisfaction Jesus offers is because the kingdom of God is breaking through the ranks of the kingdom of Satan that holds us in despair. The kingdom of God is not just in eternity but even now in the hearts of those who have submitted to the reign and Lordship of Christ. This means that even in our present hunger there is a satisfaction and contentment in Christ and His provision.

To those who weep Jesus promises laughter. The word weep here is κλαίω (klaxon) and refers to a deep wailing and grief. This grief will be turned into laughter. This laughter comes as the presence of the Lord breaks through and works out every detail for good.

Notice that Jesus does not promise that life for His disciple will be problem-free. He tells us that there will be hunger and weeping in our walk with Him. He

reminds us, however, that despite the hunger and weeping, we will see His provision and rejoice in His presence working out all things for good. As we submit to Him and His kingdom purpose we will rejoice and be satisfied.

Verse 22

Luke 6:20 tells us that Jesus “lifted up his eyes on His disciples” and spoke these blessings. The idea is that these blessings were intended for those who loved and followed Jesus. So far, we see that the disciples of Jesus would experience poverty, hunger and weeping. Jesus goes on to tell them that they would also experience hatred and evil.

As followers of Jesus, His disciples would be excluded from the temple and driven from cities and towns. They would be ridiculed and reviled because they were His followers. Our Lord tells

His disciples that people would “spurn their name as evil on account of the Son of Man!” That is to say, they would treat believers in Jesus Christ as enemies.

Understand here that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. Satan hates Jesus and all who belong to Him. He will do his utmost to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ and His followers. It should not surprise us, therefore, that we will be hated because of our stand. Jesus promises, however, that His blessing will be upon all who faithfully endure to the end. He will not neglect them in their time of need. His hand will be on them in their trial.

Verse 23

Jesus has a word for those who are hated and reviled for His name. He tells them to rejoice and leap for joy. Note

two reasons for this rejoicing and leaping.

First, the disciples of Jesus are to rejoice and leap for joy when hated, reviled and spurned because their "reward is great in heaven." God has a crown for those who persevere to the end. That reward is greater than anything we may suffer here below. Runners push themselves during the race, enduring pain and suffering for the prize that is ahead. So it is with believers. We push on, battling the enemy for the glory of the prize before us.

Second, we are to rejoice and leap for joy because we are in the company of a great host of prophets who went on before us and faced this same abuse. We are not alone in the battle. Men and women of faith have preceded us and faced a similar struggle. They set an example for us. They inspire us with their endurance. We have the privilege

of standing with these great heroes of the faith in the battle before us. We will stand with them rejoicing in the victory that will inevitably be ours in Jesus Christ. We will sit with them at the celebration table rejoicing in the goodness and power of our God to overcome.

Verse 24

Jesus moves now to a series of woes or curses. He begins with a curse upon those who are rich in this world.

Understand here that not all rich people are under this curse of God. David was rich beyond anything we could ever imagine but was “a man after God’s own heart.” When Jesus speaks here about those who are rich, He is speaking about those whose hearts are in this world and not in eternity.

Notice what Jesus tells these worldly rich — “You have received your

consolation.” The idea is that these people have made worldly wealth their comfort and abandoned God and His kingdom. God hands them over, therefore, to this wealth. There will be no eternal or spiritual blessings from God for those who have rejected Him for their earthly security and pleasure. They will see how far their worldly wealth will take them in their time of need. Having chosen this world’s comfort, they will have none of God’s consolation.

Verse 25

The next curse is upon those who are “full now” and “laugh now.” The idea is that these individuals have everything this world has to offer. They have no lack of food, pleasure or provision. In fact, this is what their lives are all about. They fill themselves with this world. They have no room for God.

They see no need of Him. They laugh and rejoice in every pleasure they can afford. They keep themselves from no worldly delight.

Note what Jesus tells these individuals. He tells them that the day is coming when they will be hungry, mourn and weep. The pleasures of this world will not satisfy them forever. The day will come when they will stand before a holy God, having blasphemed His name in their laughter and worldly pleasures, and be found wanting. They will face an eternity, separated from God and His blessing. In those days, their souls will be famished, their hearts filled with weeping, and their spirits eternally grieved by their separation from all that is good and satisfying.

Verse 26

Finally, Jesus speaks to those who are well-spoken of in this world. They are

well-spoken of because they are people-pleasers. Their lives revolve around gaining approval and being respected. Listen to the words of Paul to the Galatians:

(10) For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. – Galatians 1:10 ESV

The apostle came to the realization that if he was trying to please people he could not be a true servant of God. There are times when our service of God will call us to take a stand against people. We will be asked to preach what people do not want to hear. We will be challenged to leave our families and friends to follow the Lord. Jesus speaks about a people who could not do this. They would turn their back on God to gain the approval of men and

women around them. They would abandon God's principles to please people.

Jesus reminds these individuals that they were in that large company of false prophets throughout the ages who did the same. They spoke what people wanted them to hear but did not faithfully proclaim the truth.

Verse 27

Jesus moves now in His teaching at the level place to some words about how His followers were to treat their enemy. He tells those who were listening to Him that they were to love their enemies. The word used here is ἀγαπάω (agapáō). This kind of love is not feeling-based but a commitment of the mind and will to seek the well-being of another. In fact, Jesus expresses this sense of the word when He says, "Do good to those who hate you." The

commitment of the believer is to do good to everyone no matter how those people respond. Understanding that God reached out to us when we were His enemies, obligates believers to do likewise for those who hate them.

Verse 28

According to Jesus, His followers were to bless those who cursed them. The word bless is εὐλογέω (eulógeō). It is derived from the word eat, meaning good or well, and λόγος meaning word. The idea is that we respond to those who curse us by speaking well of them. We will not use our words in revenge. We will choose not to speak evil of them.

Blessing, however, is not only about how we use our words. My actions must also be part of that blessing. Believers will respond in kindness and compassion toward those who wish evil

upon them. The attitude of their worst enemy will not distract them from seeking to do good to them and minister to them in their need.

Jesus tells His disciples that day that if they were His true followers they would pray for those who abused them.

Consider what our Lord did in Luke 23 when the Roman soldiers nailed him to a cross and left Him to die:

(33) And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (34) And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. – Luke 23:33-34 ESV

Jesus prayed for those who crucified him, asking that the Father would forgive them for their actions. He sets

an example for us to follow, challenging us to cry out to the heavenly Father on behalf of those who abuse and harm us.

Verse 29

Jesus illustrates what it means to bless one's enemy here. He gives two examples to explain His teaching.

The first example is of a person striking a believer on the cheek. The normal response would be to strike back stroke per stroke to vanquish the enemy. Jesus tells the believer, however, not to respond in this way but rather to turn the other cheek.

This act of turning the other cheek is ultimately a refusal to take things into our own hands but a conscious choice to leave the matter in the hands of the Almighty God who cares for us. We allow Him to be our defense, knowing

that He will not only teach us through this but also do what is right and just.

The second illustration Jesus uses here is of a believer whose cloak is forcibly taken from him. Once again, the normal response is to go after the person who has stolen from us, retrieve our belongings and punish the thief for his or her actions.

Jesus tells believers, however, that they are not to hold on so tightly to the things of this world. Their treasure was in heaven. Worldly goods will perish. Everything we have is God's. If God wants to take what we have and give it to someone else, let's willingly part with it. In fact, the individual in this illustration of Jesus was not only to allow his or her cloak to be taken but also to demonstrate a willingness to give even more by offering their tunic also.

This teaching is rooted in the sense that everything I have as a follower of

Jesus belongs to Him. He has the right to use all that I have for His glory. I will not hold on so tightly to my worldly goods that I cannot set them free for Him to use as He sees fit. I will take nothing of this world with me, and all I have is for Him to use as He pleases.

Verse 30

This verse is often difficult for us to understand. As an author, I give my books out freely. Over the years I have given away hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of books free of charge. I receive regular requests from all over the world for free books. I have on my desk now requests for tens of thousands of books for free. The fact of the matter is that I do not have the finances to respond to everyone's demands. If I were to respond to these requests, I would place my family in

jeopardy and no longer be able to care for them.

Jesus tells us here to give to everyone who begs from us. The reality of the matter, however, is that we simply do not have enough resources to give to everyone who asks without compromising our other God-given obligations. To understand what Jesus is saying here we need to examine this in light of two other Bible passages.

The first passage is from 1 Corinthians 15:2 and reads:

(2) On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. – 1 Corinthians 16:2 ESV

Note how Paul challenges the believer to put aside something each week, “as he may prosper.” The phrase is

significant and shows that what each person can give is directly related to how the Lord has prospered them. Some could give more while some could give less.

The second passage is from 2 Corinthians 8:12 where Paul says:

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. – 2 Corinthians 8:12 ESV

Paul tells the Corinthians that they could be ready to give but that readiness was of no benefit unless they had the resources to back it up. God calls us to give what we have and not what we do not have.

When Jesus tells us to give to everyone who begs, He is speaking in that context of our ability. We cannot give what we do not have to give. But we

ought to be ready to part with what we can give when someone asks for it.

Jesus goes on in this passage to teach that we are not to demand back what someone takes from us. We are to willingly surrender what we have and trust God to be our Provider in time of need. The idea is that we leave this battle with the Lord and place our confidence in Him and not in a legal system or in our effort to wrestle back from someone else what belongs to us. We let the Lord fight for us.

Verse 31

Jesus tells His listeners that they were to do to others what they wished they would do to them. On the outside, this is quite simple to understand. What we need to consider, however, is that every person is different. We all have our preferences, and what I want or need

is not necessarily the same as someone else.

If I am always thinking about what I would like, then I am never thinking about the other person, their needs or desires. I might want my friend to go out for coffee with me every day and spend hours talking, so I take him out every morning without considering the fact that he really does not have the time, and I am placing him under undue stress to meet his other daily obligations. What I would want my friend to do for me, in this case, only creates stress and undue conflict for him.

To do for others what we wish they would do for us, we need to put ourselves in their shoes. If I were a person struggling with many stressful obligations and little time to complete them, would I want a friend regularly taking up my time chatting about things that really do not matter? What would I

want that friend to do for me? Maybe I might benefit from having him come over to my house to help me with my overwhelming responsibilities instead.

Only by placing ourselves in the shoes of another person can we truly understand what Jesus is telling us here. We need to do to others as we wish they would do for us if we were in their situation and had their preferences and needs.

Verse 32

It is natural for us to love those who love us and bless us. Even the worst sinner can do this. Those who love us, bless and lift us up. They are pleasant to be around. What is not natural, however, is to love those who curse us and make life difficult for us. This kind of love is divine.

Notice the question Jesus asks here about loving those who love us. "What

benefit is that to you?" Understand that there is great benefit when we love each other. A family that loves each other lives in harmony. They have each other's support. There is joy in being together. These things are beneficial for everyone involved. When Jesus asks the question, "What benefit is that to you," He is not belittling the natural benefits of love.

Observe, however, how Jesus follows up this question with the statement, "For even sinners love those who love them." This gives us the context of the question Jesus asks. He is comparing the believer with the unbeliever or the one who seeks to please God and the one who has no concern to do so. What reward is there for doing what the sinner does naturally? How do we distinguish ourselves as believers? What evidence is there that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us? What kind of love blesses the heart of the Father? Is it

not the kind of love that commits itself to the good of those who curse you? Is it not the kind of love that responds in kindness and gentleness to those who abuse you and misrepresent you? Is this not the kind of love that is rewarded in heaven? Is this not what rejoices the heart of the Father? Is there not eternal reward for those who love as Christ loved them?

Verse 33

There is an expression in English that goes like this: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." The idea is that I will relieve your itch if you relieve mine. I will help you if you help me. If you do not give to me, then don't expect anything from me.

Once again, there is something mutually beneficial about helping each other. We both have our needs met. Notice, however, that Jesus states that

this is the way of the world. Even sinners will do this naturally. They will give if they know that it will benefit them in the end. They will help those they know will help them when they are in need. They are, in essence, building credit for future needs.

What is not natural, however, is when we do good to those who will never be able to return the favour. Giving without any need or desire for recognition or return on our investment is not something that comes naturally to us. We may never receive a reward in this life but there will be one in the life to come. Consider this in light of what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:

(1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (2) "Thus, when you give to the needy,

sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (3) But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, (4) so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. – Matthew 6:1-4 ESV

According to Jesus, what He sees us doing in secret, with no desire for earthly benefit, He will reward in heaven. Jesus presents here a faith that is no longer focused on worldly benefits but looks to eternity and its heavenly reward and the privilege of pleasing the Father.

Verse 34

Jesus uses a third illustration here in His teaching. He spoke in verse 32 about loving those who love us. He goes on to speak about doing good to those who do good to us in verse 33. Finally, He speaks in this verse about loaning to those from whom we expect to receive.

We loan something to someone with the understanding that they will return what we have loaned them. Jesus tells us that even the unbeliever will do this with the understanding that they will receive back the same amount they loaned so that they do not suffer loss.

What person would loan, however, to someone knowing that what they loaned would never be returned? Would you loan to someone knowing that they would never have the means to repay or return what you had given them?

There have been times when I have loaned to people and never received back what I had loaned. This only leads

to wrong attitudes in my heart. I have determined, therefore, not to loan what I can give. I would rather give than loan with expectations of return. Jesus calls for an attitude of generous giving that does not hold onto anything it can spare for the blessing of another individual without any need for return.

Verse 35

Instead of always looking for a worldly return, Jesus tells us to love enemies who will not love us back. He asks us to lend without any expectation or need of return. He promises two things for those who live this kind of life.

First, their reward will be great. This reward will be from God the Father. I have seen personally how God provides my need when I have chosen to commit what I have to Him and use it for His glory. He becomes my provider in ways I never thought possible. If I

will use what He gives for His glory, He will see that I get what I need for that purpose. Beyond this, I have a promise of future reward for living in His purpose for my life.

Second, when we adopt the kind of lifestyle that reflects the heart of God in giving without need of return, we will be "Sons of the Most High" Understand here that Jesus is not telling us that we become "sons of the Most High" by living this lifestyle. There is only one way to become a son of God. John tells us this in John 1:12 when he said:

(12) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, – John 1:12 ESV

When Jesus tells us that we will be "sons of the Most High" by loving our enemies and lending without expecting in return, He is telling us that we are

acting as children of God by demonstrating His kindness to the ungrateful and evil. We prove to all that we are God's children and reflect His character by our actions.

Verse 36

Jesus ends this section of His teaching by challenging His listeners to be merciful just as the Father is merciful. It is all too natural to live as children of this world. Jesus calls us to cease looking to ourselves and to what is natural to us but to look to the Father as our example instead. Sin has distorted our nature, thoughts and actions. As long as we continue to walk on this path, we will never please the Father. Jesus calls us to a higher life, one that runs contrary to the world and its ways. One that exemplifies the character of our Creator.

Verse 37

Jesus moves now to a section about judging. The word He uses is κρίνω (krínō) which speaks of distinguishing between good and evil. To judge, in this sense, is to form an opinion based on a set of criteria as to whether an action, person, object or idea is worthy or unworthy, acceptable or unacceptable.

Note first the phrase, "Judge not." People often take this out of context by not quoting the rest of Jesus' statement here. Jesus actually said, "Judge not, and you will not be judged." I have met individuals who, when confronted with sin, misquote Jesus' words but tell me that Jesus said that I was not to judge. The implication in the minds of these people is that I have no right to challenge their evil ways.

The problem with this is that Jesus calls me to confront the sinful ways of a

brother or sister. Consider for example the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18:

(15) "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. – Matthew 18:15 ESV

Listen also to the words of Jesus in Luke 17 when he tells us to rebuke a brother who sins:

(3) Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, – Luke 17:3 ESV

In the Gospel of John, speaking to the religious leaders of His day Jesus says:

(24) Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." – John 7:24 ESV

Jesus tells the people of that day to “judge with right judgment.”

It seems to me, therefore, that to say that Jesus tells us not to judge one another is a misquoting of the text.

It is more likely that what Jesus is telling us here in this verse is that if we judge we will also be judged with that same judgement. If we condemn we will also be held accountable by the same standard.

Consider what Jesus says later in this passage:

(42) How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. – Luke 6:42 ESV

Note also his statement to the lawyers of the day when He said:

(46) And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. – Luke 11:46 ESV

Before you make a judgment about someone else, their actions or attitudes, consider yourself. It is all too easy for us to see the speck in our brother's eye but miss the log in our own. When you judge someone else, you open yourself up to being examined. You may not like what you find.

Instead of judging others for their actions or attitudes, Jesus tells us to forgive. Note His words here, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." We should

see this in light of Jesus' words in Mark 11:25:

(25) And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” – Mark 11:25 ESV

Instead of judging someone for something you could very likely have done in their situation, we are to forgive. If we forgive others, our heavenly father will forgive us:

(14) For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, (15) but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. – Matthew 6:14-15 ESV

Understand also that when I willingly forgive others, when I fall, they will more readily forgive me. When I judge them, they will more likely judge me, especially if I fall into the same error.

Verse 38

Jesus moves on from this principle of not judging and condemning to giving freely. "Give, and it will be given to you," Jesus tells us. Some interpret this verse to mean that by giving to others we obligate God to give to us in return. I had an email a number of years ago from an individual wanting money from me. He told me that if I gave to him, the Lord would multiply my investment in his life many times over.

Our understanding of this verse depends on our understanding of the Christian concept of giving. Is there a difference between how the world gives and how Jesus calls us to give?

Consider first what Jesus told the crowd that came seeking food from Him in John 6:

(27) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him, God the Father has set his seal.” – John 6:27 ESV

Believers, according to Jesus, are not to focus on this world and the things that will perish. Instead, they are to set their minds on the things that are above. If you give with the desire to receive more of this world, then you are not giving as the Lord intended.

Second, believers are to give freely and without expectation or requirement of repayment.

(12) He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a

dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. (13) But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, (14) and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” – Luke 14:12-14 ESV

Scripture calls us to give selflessly without focusing on earthly rewards. This is our obligation. What God does with this is up to Him. Jesus tells us, however, that the Father who sees this attitude will provide us with a “good” or abundant measure in return for our faithfulness. We will have all that we need to accomplish His purpose.

Note, Jesus’ words, “For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” Will you give generously?

It will be generously provided for you to give. Will you surrender all that you have? You will be supplied with all that you need. There is no hoarding here. You have to give to receive. We don't grow fat off the supply provided. We are merely the vessel in and through which the blessings of God are dispersed to those who need them.

Understand here that an empty vessel has nothing to offer. For that vessel to supply the needs of those around it, it must overflow. We give of that abundant overflow, pouring out to all around us, showering them with the blessings we have received from our heavenly Father.

Verse 39

Jesus tells a parable here in this section about two blind people. The parable, in essence, is two simple questions with

an obvious answer. It does, however, portray an important spiritual point.

The first question is this: "Can a blind man lead a blind man?" Generally speaking, a blind person needs someone with sight to lead him to avoid the obstacles on the way.

The second question calls the listener to reflect on the answer to the first.

"Will they not both fall into a pit?" If a blind person is being led around by another blind person, it is quite likely that they will both fall into a pit or trip over some unseen obstacle on the pathway.

The question we must address here is this: What is Jesus saying through this parable, and what is its meaning in the context? To answer this, we need to examine the response of Jesus to the disciples in Matthew 15:12-14 where He uses the same parable:

*(12) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (13) He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. (14) Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." – Matthew 15:12-14
ESV*

Note here how the parable of Jesus is in the context of the Pharisees being offended at Jesus' teaching. Jesus calls them blind guides. A guide leads another. In this case, these blind Pharisees were leading their blind followers straight into a pit.

Jesus repeats this thought in Matthew 23:23-24 where He again confronts the religious leaders of His day, calling them blind guides.

(23) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. (24) You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! – Matthew 23:23-24 ESV

Jesus seems to be speaking about the religious leaders of His day who led people without understanding the truth of God and His salvation. The end result would be that both leader and follower alike would fall into the pit where they would remain for all eternity, separated from God and His people.

Verse 40

Having stated that the religious leaders of His day were blind guides. Jesus moves on to say that disciples, when fully trained, will be just like their teachers. In this case, if the teachers of the law were blind, their disciples, when fully trained, would be no better. They would be just as blind. Jesus seems to be warning the people of His day about the teaching of their religious leaders.

Verse 41

The religious leaders of the day were quick to point out the sins of the people. They were much less quick to address their own sin. This, of course, is not just a problem for leaders but for every believer.

Jesus illustrates this by using the example of an individual who spots a speck in his brother's eye that needs to

be removed but fails to notice the log in his own eye.

It is easier to see the sin in our brother's life than our own. How often have we accused someone else of something only to have them respond by pointing out our own shortcomings, which are just as bad? It is for this reason we need to be slow to judge a brother or sister.

Verse 42

While it is easier to notice our brother's sin than our own, how can we truly help our brother address his sin when we are in a worse state than he is? In the illustration Jesus used in verse 41, would it not be easier to help a brother remove his speck if we first remove the log from our eye?

Imagine drowning in a lake when you spot your brother also drowning a distance away from you. How can you

help your brother when you are going under yourself? What support can you be when every breath you take and every effort you make is required to keep yourself alive? Will you not just take him down with yourself if you attempt to help him in your condition?

To help our brother, we need to be standing on firm ground. You cannot help him if by taking his weight, he drags you down with himself. You need to remove the log and have a measure of victory over your own sin and blindness if you are going to be of any true help to your brother in need.

Jesus is showing us how easy it is to judge others. We need, however, to be a people who are more quick to judge ourselves. Only by opening our eyes to our own shortcomings and addressing them, can we truly be of any support to a brother or sister in need.

Verse 43

Jesus has been speaking in the context of the blind religious leaders leading their disciples into a pit. He has also spoken to His listeners about the hypocrisy of pointing out the speck in a brother's eye when they had a log in their own. This is the context for what he has to say here in verse 43.

Observe how the verse begins with the word "for." This connects to the thoughts of the previous verses about spiritual blindness and hypocrisy. Jesus tells us that a good tree will not bear bad fruit, nor is a bad tree capable of bearing good fruit.

Sometimes we can become so focused on the fruit that we forget the tree. Jesus' advice about how to bear good fruit is quite simple — take care of the tree! It does not matter how many courses you take on spiritual gifts or the fruit of the Spirit. If you are not in a

right relationship with God, you will not bear good fruit. Everything begins there. Take care of your relationship with the heavenly Father and the fruit will follow. If your relationship with God is non-existent or on shaky ground, this will be reflected in your life and service.

Verse 44

If you want to know what kind of tree is growing in your backyard, wait for it to bear fruit. If you are convinced it is an apple tree and at harvest time it produces bananas, then you know you were wrong. A tree is known by the fruit it bears. Jesus illustrates this by telling us that we will never find figs on a thorn bush or grapes on a bramble bush. Figs belong on a fig tree and grapes on a grapevine. They will not grow anywhere else. The point Jesus is making is this: You can know you are a

genuine believer by the fruit you produce.

Understand something important here. Imagine that I wanted to have an apple tree in my backyard, so I find a thorn bush, go to the store, buy some apples and place them on the branches of the thorn bush. Now, in my backyard, I have a tree with apples, but it is not a genuine apple tree.

There is a world of difference between human effort and spiritual fruit. You can't confuse the thorn bush with store-bought apples with the tree that naturally produces apples. If you are a genuine believer, and the Spirit of God dwells in you, then you will produce genuine fruit. It will not be an imitation but the genuine fruit of the Spirit of God being produced from within.

Verse 45

Jesus concludes his reflection on the tree and its fruit by telling us that the good person produces good fruit, but the evil person produces evil. If you want to know if someone is genuine, examine their lives.

Notice specifically what Jesus says here about the good person. This person produces fruit from the “good treasure of his heart.” The Greek word καρδία (kardía) used here speaks of the seat of human life, desire, and impulses. It is distinct from our physical life and activities. The heart, in this sense, is not the physical organ that pumps blood to keep us alive but rather the seat of our passions priorities and motivations.

Jesus tells us that a good person is good because of what is taking place in his heart. He is good because his passions, priorities and motivations are in tune with God and His purpose. This

is a work of the Spirit of God in the life of the genuine believer.

Observe also that Jesus speaks here about "good treasure." A treasure is something precious and valuable. There is something very significant in the heart of the genuine believer. The very presence of God's Spirit is at its centre giving life, hope, and purpose for all eternity.

As for the evil person, there is an evil treasure in his heart. There are many things the evil person treasures, such as worldly possessions, recognition, or pleasure. These things motivate the evil person in how they live and the kind of fruit they produce in their lives.

Jesus concludes by telling us that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Take a moment to listen to someone speak and it will not be long before you begin to see what is important to them. As they express their passions and desires in life, you

will see what motivates them each day. They are either feeding the good or evil treasure of their heart. They speak from either a heart filled with the world or a heart filled with the Spirit of God.

Verse 46

According to Luke 6:17,18, Jesus has been “on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him.” It is to these individuals that Jesus speaks here in this next section.

Jesus asks the crowd before Him a question:

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? – Luke 6:46, ESV

It appears from this that the people who followed Jesus, came to hear Him preach and heal their sick were calling Him Lord. This was, of course, a term of respect. The word κύριος (kúrios) comes from kúros meaning might, or power. κύριος speaks of a lord or master. In calling Him Lord, the people recognized that He was not only worthy of respect but also of obedience and submission.

It is easy to call someone Lord when you want something from him. The test of the sincerity of your words, however, is not in what you say but in what you do. This is what Jesus is telling the crowd that day. If you truly believe that Jesus is Lord, then you will submit completely to Him and His will. You will die to your own plans and agendas and surrender to His.

There were many followers in the crowd that day who were full of the

right words, but unwilling to follow up on what they said.

Verse 47

Jesus goes on to speak to those who came to hear Him but did not do what He said. It is easy to assume that this statement refers to someone else. The fact of the matter, however, is that Jesus ultimately speaks to everyone of us. I don't know of anyone who is perfect. I have been a servant of God for many years and I cannot say that I have perfectly followed the Lord Jesus in every detail of my life. There are times when I find my attitude not being what it should be. I need to go deeper into obedience in various areas of my life and ministry. I need to trust Him more. I need to surrender even more to Him and His purpose. I need this reminder of Jesus here in this passage.

Jesus told the crowd that He was going to show them what it was like being a person who listened to Him but did not obey. He would do this in the form of an illustration.

Verse 48

Jesus compares the person who hears Him speak and puts it into practice to a person who, building a house, dug a deep foundation on a rock. When the waters rose and the great flood came crashing against that foundation, because it was well anchored to the rock, it remained secure.

The teaching of Jesus is not just word but life. Consider what Moses told the people of Israel in his day:

(46) he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children,

that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. (47) For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”
– Deuteronomy 32:46-47 ESV

Moses told the Israelites that the words he shared with them were not empty but their “very life.” This is what Jesus is telling us here. His words impart life.

First, they impart life in salvation. The word of God points us to the salvation of the Lord through which we can escape the great flood of judgement to come.

Second, the word of God and our obedience to it gives us true and vital spiritual life in this world. Disobedience to the Word of Christ will only grieve the Holy Spirit and strip us of the vital life He wants us all to know in Christ.

When tempted by the devil in the desert, the Lord Jesus turned to the Word of God and resisted every temptation through obedience to that Word. This Word will protect and keep us in those times of trial in our lives as well.

To disregard the Word of the Lord is to perish.

Verse 49

Jesus moves on now to tell the crowd what the person who hears Him speak but does not obey is like. He compares this person to someone who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The waters rose, and the flood crashed up against this house, and the result was catastrophic. The house fell and was ruined beyond repair.

We can only imagine such a house with its walls crashing to the ground and the

great flood sweeping them away to be forever lost. There would be no hope of ever putting such a home together again. It was completely gone.

This warning is very powerful. Do you hear what Jesus is saying? If you don't listen to His words, you will be like this house, broken and crushed, swept away and forever lost, never to rise again. Your hope is in the Word of God and in taking what He says seriously.

LUKE 7

Verse 1

Jesus has been speaking to a crowd from Jerusalem, Judea, Tyre and Sidon (see Luke 6:17-18). When He finished talking to them, Luke tells us that Jesus went to Capernaum. Capernaum is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 2

In Capernaum, there lived a centurion, whose servant was at the point of death. A centurion was a Roman military officer who had charge of one hundred soldiers. Luke mentions that

the centurion “highly valued” this servant. We are not told why he was of such high value to the centurion. It may be either because of his capable service or possibly even a friendship that had developed between them.

Verse 3

When the centurion heard that Jesus had come to Capernaum, he sent Jewish elders to ask Him to come to heal his servant. Note two details here.

First, the centurion sent for Jesus on behalf of his servant. He believed that Jesus could heal him and so he acted on his behalf with the intention of saving his life. We see the compassion of the centurion toward his servant here.

Second, the centurion did not go to Jesus himself. Instead, he sent Jewish religious leaders to implore Jesus on behalf of his cherished servant. We

learn from verse 6 that part of the reason for sending these Jewish elders was because the centurion did not feel worthy to go himself.

Verse 4

When the Jewish leaders came to Jesus they pleaded with Him on behalf of the centurion and his servant. The word translated as plead earnestly is παρακαλέω (parakaléō) and speaks of strongly beseeching or imploring. The elders are petitioning Jesus with a somewhat spirited effort to go to the centurion's house to heal his servant.

Note their argument here. They tell Jesus that this particular centurion "is worthy to have you do this for him." These words from the lips of Jewish elders about a Roman soldier were quite rare as Rome was a foreign occupying nation, strongly opposed by

the Jewish people. Apparently, this centurion was an exception to the rule.

Verse 5

Unlike many other Roman occupiers of Israel, this centurion was worthy of Jesus' attention, according to the elders for two reasons.

First, he loved the Jewish nation. Unlike many other Roman officials, the centurion had maintained a good relationship with the Jews and had proven his love for the Jewish nation, despite his presence in the country as a military leader of a foreign occupying nation.

Second, the centurion proved his love for the Jewish people and their nation by building a synagogue for them in Capernaum. The Jews were indebted to him for their place of worship. In their minds, this proved his love for them, their religion and their nation. It also

proved to them that he was worthy of Jesus' special attention.

The idea that people merited the attention of God by their good deeds is foreign to us as Christians, but this was central to the faith of these Jewish elders at that time. They believed the centurion had proven himself worthy of special attention from Jesus by his good deeds on behalf of the Jewish nation.

Verse 6

Hearing the request from the Jewish elders, Jesus determined to go to see the Roman centurion. Upon learning that Jesus approached his home, however, the centurion sent friends to Jesus with the words: "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." There is a difference between the attitude of the Jewish elders and the centurion here.

While the elders saw the centurion as a man who was worthy of Jesus' attention, this was not his attitude. He did not believe himself to be worthy of hosting Jesus in his home.

The Jewish rulers based the centurion's worthiness on his love for their nation and the fact that he built them a synagogue. The centurion, on the other hand, looked not at what he did but at the person of Jesus Christ. Compared to Jesus, the centurion felt very unworthy. Here was a man who could heal the sick and preach in the power of God. Jesus was no ordinary Jew. He was more than this. The power of God Almighty was upon Him. Compared to Jesus, the centurion felt small and insignificant. His greatest efforts on behalf of the Jewish nation were nothing compared to what Jesus did and who He demonstrated Himself to be.

Verse 7

The centurion, tells Jesus here that he did not presume to come to Him because he was unworthy. As a military commander, the centurion knew his place. He did not assume to be able to walk up to the Roman emperor and speak to him. He was too low on the chain of command to do this. Neither did he believe himself worthy to walk up to Jesus and ask Him to do something for his servant. He saw Jesus as being of much higher rank and authority, and as a mere centurion, he did not presume he could casually host Him in his house or ask Him to do something for his servant. Who was he that such an important person as Jesus would be interested in seeing him or taking the time to listen to His need?

Note the words the centurion spoke to Jesus here: "But say the word, and let

my servant be healed.” Observe two details.

First, observe that the focus is not on the centurion but on his servant. The centurion felt unworthy of Jesus’ presence in his home. He did not feel he had any right to ask Jesus for anything for himself. His request, however, is for his beloved servant. He takes a risk to speak to Jesus on his behalf. “Let my servant be healed,” he asked.

Observe second, that the centurion asked Jesus simply to speak a word so that his servant could be healed. He did not feel worthy of having Jesus come to his home but he believed that if Jesus would simply speak the word, his servant could be healed from a distance. Jesus did not have to see his servant, nor did He have to touch him. All He had to do was speak a word and command that he be well again and it would happen.

The centurion demonstrates his faith and confidence in Jesus' authority over sickness and disease. He also demonstrates confidence in His grace and mercy to heal the servant of one who was unworthy of His attention.

Isn't this how we must all approach Jesus? Who among us is worthy of His salvation? But who among us could know this salvation apart from His gracious mercy extended to those who called out to Him. The picture of Jesus approaching the home of an unworthy centurion is a demonstration of wonderful mercy and compassion. He hears the unworthy cry of the centurion for his servant and responds in loving mercy toward that cry.

Verse 8

The centurion, feeling unworthy of Jesus entering his home, tells Him instead to simply speak the word and

his servant would be well. He bases this on his understanding of military command.

As a centurion, he had been given authority over one hundred soldiers. His command was to be obeyed at all costs by those under him. When he told a soldier to go somewhere, that soldier obeyed immediately without question. When he told that soldier to come to see him, that soldier appeared before him to await his order. Whatever he told that soldier to do, he did it.

The centurion, saw the authority of Jesus to extend beyond men to the forces of sickness, disease and the demons of hell. He had heard of how demons fled at Jesus' command and sickness and disease were cured at the word of His mouth. He saw the authority of Jesus over these forces and believed that a word from His mouth was sufficient to push back the sickness that afflicted his servant. He had

absolute confidence in the power of Jesus over sickness and disease in this world.

Verse 9

Note the response of Jesus to the words of the centurion in verse 8. He marveled at him. The word marvel is θαυμάζω (thaumázō). It conveys a sense of admiration and wonder. Jesus is pleased with the attitude demonstrated by the centurion and the faith He had in His ability.

Observe what he told the crowd that followed Him that day: "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." The religious leaders who brought Jesus to the centurion believed he was worthy of Jesus' attention because he built them a synagogue. It was as if God owed the centurion something.

The centurion, however, asked nothing for himself but only for his servant. He

saw Jesus as one who bore the authority of God on this earth. He was Lord over sickness and disease. His word alone drove affliction away and imparted life and wholeness. His word alone would drive back the forces of hell. The confidence this centurion had in Jesus put the Jews to shame. While they debated and questioned Jesus' authority, the centurion was very clear that Jesus had full power over sin and death.

Verse 10

We have no record here that Jesus went to see the centurion. In fact, Luke tells us that those friends who came to tell Jesus to stay away because the centurion felt unworthy of His presence at his home, returned to the house and found the servant well. It appears that Jesus spoke the word and the servant was healed. He did so without seeing

the servant or going to the centurion's home. The healing was quiet and without spectacle. The crowd did not see Jesus heal that servant but news would have likely reached them about his healing. Though quiet and hidden from view, the miracle was nonetheless very powerful. The grace of God was revealed to an unworthy servant and the authority of Jesus over sickness and disease was unveiled.

Verse 11

Soon after the healing of the centurion's son, Jesus went from Capernaum to a town called Nain. Nain is located close to Nazareth, about 40 kilometres or 25 miles southwest of Capernaum. Jesus was there with His disciples and a great crowd followed Him. This crowd likely followed to hear Him teach and see the miracles He performed.

Verse 12

As Jesus, His disciples, and the crowd approached the town of Nain, they noticed a funeral procession. A man was being carried out of the town likely to a burial plot. Notice what Luke tells us about this man. He was the only son of a widowed mother. This son had likely been her only source of support and the mother would have depended on him for financial aid and assistance. There is no mention here of a wife or children, only the man's widowed mother. This may imply that the dead man was fairly young and unmarried.

Luke also tells us that there was a "considerable crowd from the town with the widow." The people of the town felt her loss and stood with her in support.

Verse 13

Notice Jesus' response to the grieving mother.

First, when Jesus saw her, He felt compassion for her. The word translated as compassion is σπλαγχνίζομαι (splagchnízomai) and speaks of a deep yearning or pity. Jesus' heart was broken for this lady and her situation. He felt her pain deeply.

Second, Jesus' compassion moved Him to speak to the widow. Observe that He told her not to weep. Weeping is a natural response to the loss of a loved one. The apostle John records Jesus' response to the death of his friend Lazarus when he wrote John 11:35:

(35) Jesus wept. – John 11:35 ESV

Clearly, there is nothing wrong with weeping over the loss of an only son. Jesus' command not to weep here is for a very special reason. He was about to

do something that would remove all tears from the widow's eyes.

Verse 14

After telling the widow not to weep, Jesus approached the "bier". A bier is a frame or stand upon which a corpse or coffin is carried. Jesus does two things upon approaching the bier.

First, Jesus touched the bier. Luke's explanation of what took place when Jesus touched the bier, shows us His intention. "The bearers stood still." Jesus' purpose in touching that bier was to stop the procession.

Second, when the procession had stopped and all eyes were on Him, Jesus then spoke to the dead man and said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."

Observe the words, "young man." The man who had died was young and had a full life ahead of him. This may have

been the reason for such a large crowd that day. This young man died in the prime of his life.

Jesus speaks directly to this young man lying dead on his bier. He commands his dead body to rise. In essence, He is commanding life to come back to him.

Verse 15

Observe the response of the dead body to the command of Jesus to rise. Luke tells us that the “dead man sat up and began to speak.” Jesus demonstrated that He had power over death. Our great enemy death has no ultimate victory over those who belong to Jesus. Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul told them that the day would come when the Lord Jesus would descend from heaven with a “cry of command” and the dead would rise to be with Him forever:

(16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 ESV

We have here a foretaste of what will one day be a great resurrection of the dead.

Notice how Luke tells us that Jesus gave this young man to his mother. The bier likely was lowered when the man rose from the dead. Jesus then took him to his mother and presented him alive to her.

Verse 16

Note the response of the crowd to this miracle of Jesus. Luke tells us that “fear seized them all.” The word translated fear is φόβος (phóbos) and speaks of terror, reverence or honour. The fear these individuals experienced was from being in the presence of the divine. They stood before someone who had the power to raise the dead. This was not a power they had seen before. They stood in deep awe and reverence.

Note secondly that the crowd glorified God. They understood that the authority they saw that day was not of human origin. It was from God and they gave Him the glory for such a powerful demonstration of His might.

Finally, the crowd recognized Jesus as a great prophet through whom God was working in their midst. They did not yet see Jesus as God but as His servant through whom the Father was doing mighty works.

Verse 17

The miracle Jesus performed that day not only resulted in glory being given to the Father but also that His fame began to spread throughout the region of Judea and the countryside.

Sometimes the only way for the work of God to spread is for God to elevate His servant and spread his fame. People came to Jesus because of the reports they had heard of Him. When they came and heard Him speak, they were forced to make up their mind about Him and His message.

The problem with fame, however, is that all too many people are unable to handle it. It goes to their head and they become proud. It takes special grace from God to remain humble and focused when crowds begin to gather.

A number of years ago I was seeking the Lord for greater authority and power in ministry. In response, He

showed me a picture of a pouch and told me that this pouch was humility. He then went on to tell me that I could only have as much authority as my pouch of humility could contain. That picture has remained with me.

Jesus is a picture of this pouch of humility carrying the perfect authority of the father wherever He went. Fame and authority must always be carried in a pouch of humility. There was no one who demonstrated this better than the Lord Jesus. His life from beginning to end demonstrated the balance of authority and perfect humility. Here in Jesus we see one whose fame spread throughout the regions he travelled but whose humility was such that he would lay His life down as a servant for those to whom He ministered.

Verse 18

Among those who followed Jesus were disciples of John the Baptist. Remember that John had announced the coming of Jesus and declared Him to be the lamb of God who took away the sins of the world (see John 1:29). It would have been quite natural for His disciples to follow Jesus and listen to His teaching.

Note here that these disciples reported to John the things that they were seeing and hearing. John would also have been curious to hear what Jesus was teaching and to hear reports of His miracles.

Verse 19

Luke tells us here how John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus with a very important question: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

According to the parallel passage in Matthew 11, John the Baptist was in

prison when he sent these two disciples to Jesus:

(2) Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples (3) and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" – Matthew 11:2-3 ESV

It is uncertain why John asked this question. There are two schools of thought here.

First, some suppose that John, at this time in his life, was going through a crisis of faith. He was in prison for his faith and speaking out against Herod and his ungodly relationship with his brother's wife. Did John, like the Jews of his day, have a certain idea about what the kingdom of God would look like under the Messiah? Was Jesus fulfilling those expectations? It is possible that John needed clarification

about the role and function of the Messiah.

Second, others reject the idea that John was having a crisis of faith and teach that he was actually using these questions as a means of teaching his disciples about Jesus and His role as Messiah. By having his disciples ask these questions of Jesus, they would hear directly from Him how He fulfilled the role of the promised Messiah.

Verse 20

In obedience to their teacher, the disciples of John found Jesus and asked whether He was the one who was to come or if they needed to look for another. The question is very direct and one that no one else seemed to have the courage to ask. Many people wondered if Jesus was the Messiah but few dared to ask Him directly, especially with a heart that was open to listen to

His response. It was a question, however, that demanded a response and a question for which we all must have an answer. Is Jesus the Son of God and Saviour? The question is likely the most important one we can ask, for upon its answer hangs our destiny and salvation.

Verse 21

When John's disciples came to Jesus with that vital question, Luke tells us that our Lord was healing people of diseases and plagues. He was casting out evil spirits and many who were blind were having their physical sight restored. Luke is telling us what he thought about this question here by pointing us to the miraculous signs Jesus was performing. He is showing us how the curse of sin through sickness and demonic oppression was being pushed back through the authority and

power of Jesus. In Luke's mind, who but the Messiah could demonstrate such power and authority over evil.

Verse 22

Note the response of Jesus to John's disciples. He does not directly answer the question but instead tells his disciples to return to their master, John, and tell him what they saw. In particular, they were to tell him that the blind received their sight, the lame walked again, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the good news preached to them.

Consider this word of Jesus in the context of the prophecy of Isaiah about the Messiah:

(1) The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to

the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound – Isaiah 61:1 ESV

Jesus points John and His disciples to the Scriptures and the evidence of the prophetic word about the Messiah. He is asking them to make up their own mind about Him by examining the signs He performed and comparing them to the clear teaching of Scripture written about Him.

Verse 23

Jesus ends His answer to John's disciples by telling them that the person who was not offended by Him was blessed. The word offended in the Greek language is σκανδαλίζω (skandalízō). It speaks of a stumbling

block or something over which a person might trip or be led astray.

When Jesus preached in Nazareth, His hometown the people of the region were offended by Him and His preaching. They could not believe that anyone from their hometown could have such a calling from God:

(55) Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? (56) And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (57) And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and in his own household." (58) And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. – Matthew 13:55-58 ESV

The Pharisees also were offended by the teaching of Jesus:

(12) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" – Matthew 15:12 ESV

In both of these cases, the offence kept the people of that day from accepting Jesus as the Messiah or even listening to what He had to teach. To be offended in this sense is to reject His teaching. It is to allow prejudices and preconceived ideas to keep us from accepting the obvious truth.

Verse 24

Jesus has been answering the question posed by John's disciples in verse 19. After telling them to go back to John, who was in prison, and tell him what

they saw, Jesus then speaks directly to the crowd who had likely heard his answer.

Jesus begins his address about John by asking the crowd a question – “What did you go out into the wilderness to see?

Note first, the reference to the wilderness. As a young man, John lived in the wilderness away from the influences of common society. Matthew speaks about John the Baptist in Matthew 3 where he says:

(1) In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, (2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (3) For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" – Matthew 3:1-3 ESV

Matthew describes John as a voice “crying out in the wilderness.” To hear John preach, people needed to go to the wilderness to hear him.

Notice second the reference to a reed shaken by the wind. The question John asked could have been interpreted by the crowd to mean that John was uncertain about the truth he preached. After proclaiming that Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, John now sent his disciples to ask if Jesus really was the one who was to come or if they needed to look for another. Jesus knew the thoughts of the people in the crowd and used an illustration here of a reed tossed by the wind. If you have ever seen reeds in a strong wind, you will know that, unlike a sturdy tree, the reeds blow wherever the wind takes them. They do not have the power to resist the wind.

The picture Jesus is painting here is of a person who is driven by every wind of

doctrine or influenced by the people around them. Such a person is unstable. Paul challenges the Ephesians not to be like this in Ephesians 4:14 when he says:

(14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. – Ephesians 4:14 ESV

The question Jesus is asking the crowd that day is this: What kind of person did you see when you went out into the wilderness and heard John speak? Did he appear to you to be someone who was driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine? Did he appear to you to be one who was influenced by the people listening to him? Was he like a reed shaken by the wind?

A quick look at John the Baptist clearly demonstrated that he held nothing back. He spoke powerfully to the religious leaders calling them a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 3:7). He told soldiers to stop extorting money and falsely accusing people (Matthew 3:14). He openly challenged Herod for taking his brother’s wife (Matthew 14:3). Clearly, the people who went to see John in the wilderness understood that he was not a reed blown in the wind. He stood tall and strong against the falsehood of the day.

Verse 25

Jesus demonstrated in verse 24 that John was not a reed blown by the wind. He stood strong against falsehood and unrighteousness in his day. John was not a leader influenced by people and popular opinions.

Jesus moves next to speak about John and his lifestyle. Again he asked the crowd what they saw as they went out into the wilderness to hear John preach. Was he dressed in soft and luxurious clothing? Did he live in the lap of luxury? Did you see John in the courts of great officials and kings?

According to Matthew 3, John wore a camel's hair garment with a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild honey. His clothing was very simple. He ate what he could scavenge from the earth. He was not caught up in making an impression. He shunned wealth and possessions and was content to live off the land one day at a time.

(4) Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. – Matthew 3:4 ESV

Unlike many religious leaders in Jerusalem, John the Baptist's commitment was to the message he preached and not to anything he could gain from his position.

Verse 26

Who was John the Baptist? He was not a man influenced by people, nor was he caught up in possessions and reputation. When the people went into the wilderness to see John, they went to hear a prophet of God. He was, first and foremost, a mouthpiece of God, communicating His heart to the people who came to hear him. This was the passion of John –to share the word of God unashamedly to all who would listen.

Notice here, according to Jesus, that John was more than an ordinary prophet. He had a very special role not

given to any other. Jesus will explain this more fully in verse 27.

Verse 27

Jesus told the crowd that John was “more than a prophet.” He explained this by quoting from Malachi 3:1:

‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’

Malachi spoke of a messenger who was to come to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. According to Jesus, John the Baptist was the messenger promised by Malachi, tasked with the role of preparing the way for the Messiah.

Verse 28

Jesus has some powerful words to speak here about John. According to Jesus, there was none greater than him among those born of women. This greatness was not because he was better than anyone else, although he did live a life devoted to Christ and His purpose. John, like every one of us, was a sinner in need of a Saviour.

John's greatness was not so much because of his lifestyle as it was his calling. He had been specifically chosen by God to announce the coming of the best news this world has ever heard — the coming of the Lamb of God to save the world from sin.

As great as John was, notice that Jesus told the crowd that day that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than John. Let's break this statement down to see what Jesus is saying here.

First, what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God in the New Testament is not so much a physical kingdom at

this time, as it is the rule of Christ in the hearts and lives of those who have become His children and surrendered to His Lordship.

What is the greatness of those who are part of this kingdom? Their greatness is found in the forgiveness of Jesus, the work of His Spirit in their lives and their eternal destiny in the presence of Christ forever.

You can have everything this world has to offer and fall far short of God's purpose for your life if you do not belong to Him. You can offer your life in sacrificial service, but if you do not belong to Christ and are not His child, then all of that is vain.

The greatness of those who belong to the kingdom of God is found in the work of Jesus in their lives, forgiving, transforming and sealing for life in eternity.

Verse 29

Note what Luke tells us was the response of the ordinary people, including the tax collectors, to the words of Jesus that day. They declared God just. The word translated “just” is δικαίῳ (dikaiō) and refers to something righteous. In other words, The crowd declared that God’s ways were right and perfect.

The people had just heard Jesus speak about John the Baptist and his ministry. John announced the promised Messiah who came to save the world from sin and to establish a new kingdom over which He would be Lord.

Jesus declared that those who belonged to this kingdom would be greater than John the Baptist. They would experience forgiveness and hope of eternal life through His work on the cross. John died before the Lord and did not see or experience the

implications of that cross in the life of the believer.

Those belonging to the kingdom of God submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His reign in their hearts. Through Him, they experience forgiveness of sin and new life.

Among the crowd gathered to hear Jesus that day were many who had been baptized by John. This was the message he preached to them – forgiveness through the coming Messiah who would take away the sins of the world. These individuals had repented of their sins and looked to the Messiah John announced as their hope of forgiveness and eternal life.

Verse 30

While the crowd generally accepted the message of Jesus, this was not the case for the Pharisees and lawyers. Luke tells us that they rejected the

purpose of God and refused the baptism of John. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. All who came to be baptized by Him confessed their sin and declared their hope in Jesus the Messiah.

The religious leaders were the hardest in heart. They rejected this message of the kingdom of God and Jesus as the Messiah. They refused to recognize their sin and saw no need of being baptized or repenting. They were content with the old ways and traditions and there they would remain. In doing so, they rejected the purpose of God and sealed their eternal fate.

Verse 31

Having told the people about John the Baptist in verses 24 to 28, Jesus now moves on to speak about the people of John's generation who had heard Him preach.

Verse 32

Jesus compares the people of that generation to children sitting in the marketplace. As with most children, they can't sit too long before they need to be busy with something. Some among them take up a flute and begin to play joyous music, expecting the others to dance but these children do not respond to the flute and refuse to dance. So, instead of playing joyous flute music, they sing a sad song, but these same children refuse to weep when they sing the song. They were not content with either the joyous or sad music. I can imagine them sitting there in the marketplace bored out of their mind, refusing to join the other children in play.

Verse 33

Jesus gets to the point of His illustration in verse 32. This generation was like immature children discontent with everything. John the Baptist came to them in his simple attire, not eating bread or drinking wine, and they looked at him and said, "He has a demon." They rejected John and his message and wanted nothing to do with him.

Verse 34

Unlike John the Baptist, Jesus, the Son of Man, came eating bread and drinking wine. The response of that generation was to say: 'Look at Him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Like the immature children in the marketplace, they refused to dance to the joyous music or weep with the sad music, rejecting both Jesus and John and the message they brought. They sat there finding fault with everyone and rejecting everything.

Verse 35

Jesus concludes His comparison of that generation with the words, "Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." To understand what Jesus is saying here we need to consider the word "justified." The Greek word δικαιῶω (dikaióō) in this context speaks about recognition, a declaration or to set forth. The idea seems to be that true wisdom is set forth or revealed in the lives of its children. These children demonstrate wisdom in how they live and in the decisions they make.

This appears to be in direct contrast to the children who sat in the marketplace discontent with everything. It is a reference to the Pharisees and lawyers of verse 30 who refused to accept either the teaching of John or Jesus but criticized them both, demonstrating their disdain for the wisdom of God.

Verse 36

Jesus was invited to a Pharisee's home for a meal. It is uncertain why the religious leader invited Jesus. For the most part, the Pharisees had rejected Jesus' teaching and were seeking a reason to kill Him. Jesus, however, does not hesitate to join him for a meal.

Verse 37

While they were reclined at the table, "a woman of the city, who was a sinner," learned that Jesus was present in the home. We are not told the nature of her sin, nor is it necessary to know in this context. Suffice it to say that she was not a righteous woman, nor did she concern herself with living according to the Law of Moses or the purpose of God for her life.

Note, however, that when she learned that Jesus was at the Pharisee's home,

she found an alabaster flask of ointment and went to see Him. Alabaster is a soft mineral that can be easily carved and used as a container. In this case, the alabaster flask contained a perfumed ointment.

Verse 38

It is uncertain how the sinful woman was able to enter the Pharisee's home. Under normal conditions, she would not likely have been permitted entrance, nor would any Pharisee have wanted to be seen with her.

She made her way to the table where Jesus was reclined and, standing behind Him, began weeping, wetting His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. She also kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment she had brought with her.

While it was common for servants to wash the feet of the family guests, this

was quite different. The woman behind Jesus was an uninvited sinner. She seemed to be making a bit of a scene. We can imagine that there would have been individuals present who were deeply offended by her presence and what she was doing that day.

On the other hand, observe that the woman was in tears. Something was happening in her that brought out those tears. Her devotion to Jesus is seen in how she wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them and anointed them with her special perfume. She was demonstrating to all present what she felt about Jesus. She may have been ashamed of her ways, but she was not ashamed of Jesus.

Verse 39

Observe the response of the Pharisee who hosted the meal. Luke tells us that when he saw this woman and what she

was doing he began to say to himself: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."

Note first, the statement, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known." The Pharisee was uncertain about Jesus. He might have considered Him to be a prophet but what he saw that day seemed to crush that idea. A genuine prophet would have known that this woman was a sinner. In the Pharisee's mind, however, Jesus did not seem to be aware of this.

Second, observe the difference in perspective between Jesus and the Pharisee. The Pharisee could not get past the fact that this woman was a sinner. To have her touch him would have made him impure. He wanted nothing to do with her. He judged her by her actions and lifestyle.

Jesus, on the other hand, did not seem to have a problem with the woman. He accepted her actions as they were, an act of love and devotion to Him. He saw her tears and understood that she was a sinner coming with a repentant heart.

Verse 40

We understand from verse 39 that the Pharisee said to himself that if Jesus were truly a prophet He would have known who the woman was who was touching Him. Luke makes it clear in verse 39 that these thoughts were not vocalized but said to himself.

What is interesting to see here, however, is how Jesus, as a prophet, understands the thoughts of this man's mind and addresses those thoughts in particular.

Jesus speaks directly to the Pharisee and calls him by name. He told Simon

the Pharisee that He had something to say to Him. Simon grants Jesus permission to speak.

Verse 41

Jesus is in the home of Simon the Pharisee. A sinful woman came in while they were dining and washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. This caused Simon to wonder if Jesus knew who she was and, if so, why He would let her touch Him. Jesus, knowing Simon's thoughts, determined to tell him a parable.

The parable Jesus told Simon that day related to a moneylender who had two debtors. The first one owed him five hundred denarii, and the second debtor owed him fifty. One denarius was equivalent to about a day's work for a labourer.

Verse 42

Neither debtor could pay what they owed to the moneylender so he determined to cancel their debt. Having painted the picture, Jesus now asked Simon a question. "Now which of them will love him more?"

To put this in perspective, the first man owed the equivalent of one year four and a half months salary. The second owed only one month and three weeks. Who would be the most grateful for the cancelling of his debt? To whom would the cancelling of this debt bring the greatest release?

Verse 43

Simon told Jesus that the man who was forgiven the most probably loved the moneylender more. Jesus assured him that he had answered correctly. What Simon did not realize, however, was

how Jesus was going to apply the simple truth He had just communicated to him.

Verse 44

Still speaking to Simon, Jesus directed his attention to the sinful woman. He reminded him that when He arrived at his home, he did not give Him water to wash His feet, a common courtesy of the time. This woman, however, wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. While Simon did not show the simplest courtesy, this sinful woman went far beyond what was expected.

Verse 45

A kiss on the cheek is a common form of greeting in many cultures, showing respect and affection for the guest. When Jesus arrived at Simon's house, the host did not greet Him with such a

kiss. This sinful woman, however, stooped down and kissed Jesus' feet, showing more respect and love for Him than Simon.

Verse 46

Before soap was common, oil was used as a cleanser. It would help dissolve the dirt and also moisturize the skin.

Imagine a guest arriving at your home after travelling on the dusty roads of Jerusalem. He is hot and sweaty from the heat of the day and dusty from the roads. You greet him at the door with water to cleanse his feet and oil to absorb the sweat and dust on his face and moisturize his skin. Simon did not offer these acts of hospitality to Jesus. The sinful woman, on the other hand, took precious ointment from her alabaster flask and anointed Jesus' feet as He reclined to eat.

Verse 47

Jesus now gets to the point of His parable. The woman before them had committed many sins in her life. Simon, on the other hand, lived a generally good life serving God and trying to walk according to the Law of Moses.

This woman, however, repenting of her sin, understood how much she was forgiven by Christ. Like the man owing 500 denarii, she was truly grateful to Christ for the forgiveness of so many sins.

Simon, on the other hand, while he knew he sinned occasionally and needed forgiveness for these sins, did not feel he was as much a sinner as this woman. He was like the man who owed only 50 denarii.

The point Jesus makes is this: "He who is forgiven little, loves little." Simon did not grasp the concept of grace as much as this sinful woman. She knew the

depth of her depravity and sinfulness. She understood how much she had been forgiven. She saw the grace of God in a way that Simon never could. She had been forgiven much and deeply appreciated the immense love and grace of God that would reach down to her when she was so sinful. She expressed this love through her actions that day. Simon's lack of hospitality, demonstrated that his love and gratitude to Jesus was lacking.

Verse 48

Seeing her repentant heart, Jesus extends His forgiveness to the sinful woman. She came to Jesus a broken woman, sinful and grieving over her evil ways. She would leave pardoned for her past and set free to live a new life. Admittedly, it would take people a while to see her in a new light. Jesus, however, declared that before God, her

past would no longer stand against her. She was released from guilt and shame and stood cleansed before God of all her sins.

Verse 49

Note the response of those who were at the table with Jesus to this declaration of forgiveness — “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” In the Jewish mind, there was only one person who could forgive sin. God alone has this authority and power. He alone has the right to pardon sinners and set them free from guilt. That was generally accomplished through the sacrifice of an animal on their behalf. The idea that Jesus could declare forgiveness without requiring that this woman make the customary sacrifices was quite foreign to those reclining at the table.

In Luke 5:17-20 Jesus healed a paralytic that was lowered down to Him through the roof of the home where He taught. That day He declared that this man's sins were forgiven and told him to rise from his bed and go home. The religious leaders present that day accused Jesus of blasphemy for declaring the man's sins forgiven:

(21) And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" – Luke 5:21 ESV

Luke does not go into detail about the response of those reclining at the table that day. He simply tells us that they began to question who Jesus was to be able to forgive sins. Some may have wondered if He was the Son of God. Others may have, like the Pharisees of Luke 5, believed that He was blasphemous for such a declaration.

Verse 50

While others may have questioned Jesus' right to forgive this woman, Jesus, speaking directly to her, says: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Observe two details here.

First, Jesus told the woman that her faith had saved her. What was the nature of that faith? The woman demonstrated her faith in Jesus by coming to Him as a helpless sinner, repenting with tears and placing her full confidence in Him alone for forgiveness. Her faith was not in what she had done but in the mercy and compassion of a great Saviour to pardon.

Second, observe that Jesus told her to "go in peace." Kneeling before Jesus that day, she had no peace. Her heart was in turmoil. Her soul was in distress. Jesus knew this agitation. She could not have peace as long as she was not

forgiven and in a right relationship with God. Jesus declared her sins forgiven and every obstacle to a relationship with Him removed. She stood before Jesus that moment a new woman, cleansed of every sin and freed from past guilt and shame. She could, from that point forward, be at peace with God and assured that her past shame would never again come between her and her God.

LUKE 8

Verse 1

It was soon after His time with Simon the Pharisee that Jesus and His disciples travelled through the villages and cities, preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. Chapter 7 indicates that Jesus was in Capernaum and Nain of Galilee. It seems likely that Jesus and His disciples are visiting various cities in Galilee.

Observe an important detail here found in the phrase, “proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.” Jesus gives us an example to follow here. The good news of the

kingdom is dispersed by “proclaiming” and “bringing.”

First, the word translated proclaiming is κηρύσσω (kērússō). It means to preach, publish or announce. The idea seems to be that the good news is preached and announced to people in words. God has determined that we should use our mouths to proclaim the gospel and share the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Second, Luke tells us that Jesus and the disciples “brought” the good news to these cities and villages. The word used here is εὐαγγελίζω (euaggelízō). It is derived from the Greek word eu, meaning good and aggéllō, meaning to proclaim or tell.

Both of these words could refer to a similar action. In fact, the word εὐαγγελίζω (euaggelízō) is most often translated in the New Testament by the English word preach, but not exclusively so. It is also translated by

the word “bring” (Luke 1:19; 2:10; Acts 13:32) or “brought” (1 Thessalonians 3:6). The word κηρύσσω (kērússō) seems to be exclusively translated by preach, proclaim or publish. While the difference may be minuscule, I would not limit εὐαγγελίζω (euaggelízō) to “word” only but also to deeds, actions and other means that declare and bring this good news to the unbeliever.

Verse 2

Observe that bringing the gospel to the cities and villages of Galilee was not only in word but its truth and power was demonstrated through healing and casting out demons. The gospel was having an impact in these cities and villages as people were freed from demonic oppression and sickness. Luke names one woman in particular who was set free from seven demons. Mary Magdalene would become an important

follower of Jesus as He travelled from place to place.

What is important for us to know is that the gospel is not just good news but also the power of God for salvation and deliverance. Where the gospel is preached and accepted, expect to see the power of God demonstrated in wonderful ways as the kingdom of Satan is pushed back.

Verse 3

We catch a glimpse, in this verse, of the women who supported Jesus in very practical ways as He travelled throughout the region. Of particular note were Joanna and Susanna. While Luke says nothing about Susanna, he does tell us that Joanna's husband, Chuza, was Herod's household manager. As such, she would have had resources to use in support of Jesus and His ministry. Luke tells us that

Joanna and Susanna, although principal supporters of Jesus and His ministry, were not the only ones to provide for Him and His disciples. He tells us that there were also “many others.”

Verse 4

As Jesus travelled from village to village, great crowds came to hear Him speak. Note particularly that while Jesus did perform miracles, the crowd in question had come to hear Jesus speak. They were curious about His teaching. Understanding that the crowd would be unable to grasp the spiritual truths He taught, Jesus determined to illustrate His teaching using stories of everyday life. He spoke to them in parables.

Some say that the only way to preach is to have a text of Scripture and speak from it. I am convinced that this form of preaching is vital. This is why I write

these commentaries. Note here, however, that Jesus does not quote from a passage of Scripture but uses a story from everyday life to convey a spiritual lesson to those who had gathered to hear Him preach. The goal was to convey the truth of Scripture to those who had not yet been given the ability to understand it. In fact, a good part of Jesus' teaching was in parables.

Verse 5

Jesus' parable was about a sower who went out into the field to sow his seed. The seed was likely in some form of container or bag. As he walked the full length of the field, the sower would reach his hand into the bag and scatter the seed over the field. While the sower would attempt to cast his seed on good ground, the nature of this sowing method implied that not all the seed would fall on ideal soil. Jesus tells the

crowd that some of the seed fell on a well-worn pathway and people walked on it as they passed by. Other seed was eaten by birds who swooped down to fill their bellies.

Verse 6

As the sower scattered his seed, some fell on the rocks sticking up above the ground. This seed would sprout and begin to grow but eventually withered away because its roots could not penetrate through the hard rock, or shriveled up on the rock before they could reach the soil to find water.

Verse 7

Other seeds scattered by the sower fell among thorns. These thorns grew up faster than the newly sown seeds, choking them out so that, deprived of

sunlight and nutrients, they were unable to grow.

Verse 8

The final seed fell into good soil. This seed had the environment it needed to thrive. Supported by the sunlight, ample nutrients, and protected from predators and passers-by, it was able, not only to germinate and mature, but also produced a hundredfold fruit.

With these words, the Lord Jesus ended His message to the people, challenging those who had understanding ears to hear what He had to say.

The word “hear,” is the Greek word ἀκούω (akóuō). While it refers to the ability to perceive sounds and words, it also has the sense of learning and obeying. What Jesus seems to be saying is something like this: If you can

understand the words I am saying, take it to heart and put it into practice.

Jesus does not make a huge effort to convince the crowd. He simply speaks the truth in a way they could understand and leaves the rest to the Holy Spirit to apply it to the lives of those who could hear and understand.

Verse 9

Having shared His parable about the sower, Jesus left the crowd to ponder its meaning. He does not take the time to explain it to them.

Note that Jesus' very own disciples struggled to understand the truth He was trying to convey through the parable. They asked Him to explain it to them.

It is interesting to note that the meaning of the parable is not explained until the disciples asked for clarification.

In my experience with the Word of God, it is quite easy to read it and not truly grasp what it is saying. The Scriptures are spiritually discerned and as such we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to show us their truth and application to our lives. All too many people hear the word of God but never ask the Lord to clarify and apply it to their lives. I can assure you that there is a depth and application to the Word that the Spirit of God is willing to reveal to all who will diligently ask Him.

Verse 10

Note the response of Jesus when the disciples asked Him to explain the significance of the parable of the sower. He told them that they had been given the ability to know the secrets of the kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven on this earth is the rule of Christ in the hearts and lives

of those who love and believe in Him. These individuals bow their knees to Him and His purpose for their salvation, sanctification and service in this world.

Notice next that Jesus speaks here about the "secrets of the kingdom." These secrets are only secret because they cannot be seen by those who do not belong to the kingdom. The mind of the unbeliever has not been open to comprehending the purpose of Jesus and His work on this earth. Until the Holy Spirit reveals this truth, it will be hidden from the unbeliever. The work of the Holy Spirit is to open our eyes and ears to the truth of Scripture and the work of Jesus. Until He does, these truths will remain hidden to us.

Observe also that Jesus told His disciples that they had been "given to know" the secrets of the kingdom. The word "given" is significant. It shows us that the ability to understand spiritual truths is not natural to us but must be

given as a gift from above. Until the Spirit of God opens my eyes, I will not understand who Jesus is and what He came to do.

Having been given the ability to know the secrets of the kingdom, did not mean the disciples knew those secrets. This was why they had to ask Jesus to explain the parable to them

Observe how Jesus told His disciples that He spoke in parables to those who did not have the ability to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. He shared illustrations and stories they could understand in earthly terms. Note, however, what the result of this teaching would be. Those who heard His parables but were not given the ability to understand would see the illustration but not its spiritual application. They would hear what Jesus said, but not understand its meaning. Words and preaching alone will not convince the unbeliever, they

must also be given the ability to know the secrets of the kingdom. That ability is given by the Holy Spirit alone.

Verse 11

Jesus goes on here in the text to explain the meaning of the parable. Because the disciples had been “given to know” the truths of the kingdom, Jesus’ explanation would make sense to them.

Our Lord began by telling the disciples that the seed that was scattered was the Word of God. That truth would be preached around the world. Understand here the power of the seed to germinate and produce fruit. Such is the power of the Word that goes out. It is a life-changing Word.

Verse 12

Observe next that the hardened pathway represents people who hear the word, but the devil comes and takes it away. This seed has no opportunity to penetrate into the hardened hearts of those who hear it to have its effect. As a result, they do not believe or experience the new life this seed offers.

Note that the devil is actively opposing the word sown in the lives of those who hear it. He knows the power of the word and will do all he can to keep it from germinating. We are not told why the hearts of these individuals have been hardened. I have met people who are hardened to the gospel message because of experiences in life or church. These individuals are easy targets for the devil. They have a natural resistance to the seed and he assures that this seed will not penetrate through that hard soil.

Verse 13

Jesus speaks next about the rocks upon which the seed fell. The rock is similar to the hardened pathway. The difference between the rock and the pathway is that the soil on the pathway is hardened from years of people walking on it. The soil found on a rock does not suffer from this condition. We have all seen grass or plants growing in the soil deposited on rocks.

The problem with the rock is that while soil may be deposited on it, it is too hard for the roots to penetrate. The small amount of soil is insufficient for the health and vitality of the plant. Because the roots cannot penetrate the rock just inches below, the plant is not firmly rooted. When the winds and storms pass by, it is uprooted and perishes.

Jesus tells his disciples that many people are like this. They hear the word

of God and like what they hear. They may appear to grow for a time but their roots are not sunk into good soil. When the storms of life strike, their commitment to Christ, like the shallow roots of the plant on the rock, is unable to sustain them, and they are uprooted and fall away. These individuals followed Jesus for a time but they were not the kind of followers Jesus wanted. The hard rock interior had never been broken or removed. They had never truly been transformed by the power of His Spirit.

Verse 14

The next type of soil Jesus speaks about was filled with thorns. According to Jesus, this soil represented those who heard the word but were distracted by the cares, riches and pleasures of life. Note how Jesus

describes the cares, riches and pleasures of life as thorns.

We all know how careful we need to be about handling plants with thorns. Who among us has not been scratched by a thorn? Jesus tells us that the cares, riches and pleasures of life can wound you if not handled carefully. All too many people have been seriously harmed because they did not take these things seriously.

The thing about thorns in a garden is that they are not only difficult to remove because of the damage they can cause, but, if they are not uprooted, they will quickly choke out everything else that grows around them. These thorns block the sunlight and rob other plants of nutrients. The seeds planted among thorns grew for a time but were never healthy. The thorns robbed them of their vitality and kept them from producing fruit.

All too many people want the Lord, their riches and pleasures. They are unwilling to surrender all they have to Christ. They attempt to serve two masters. These are not the followers Jesus is looking for. Those who follow Him must confess Him as their only Lord and commit to bowing the knee to Him alone.

Verse 15

Finally, Jesus speaks about the good soil. He told His disciples that the good soil represented those who heard the word and held fast with an honest and good heart.

The good soil was full of nutrients. The roots could go deep into that soil, strengthening the plant and enabling it to resist the storms of life. Because the plant was well-nourished, it could produce an abundance of crops.

Note the three-fold characteristics of the people represented by the good soil.

First, upon hearing the word, they hold it fast. These individuals believe the Word and receive it from God. They commit themselves to obedience and walk under its counsel and guidance. Even when they do not understand what God tells them in it, they walk obediently, trusting what He says. They will not be distracted from God's revealed purpose, trusting it completely.

Second, these individuals hold fast to the word with an honest and good heart. This distinguishes them from those who obeyed with ulterior motives. The Pharisees of the New Testament were obedient to the Law of Moses but they were very keen on building a reputation and status for themselves as spiritual leaders in their community. Some walk in the word

because they would be afraid of what people might say if they didn't. This is not the case for those represented by the good soil. There are no dishonest intentions here. They live and walk in obedience to God out of a sincere and good heart. There is no hypocrisy. They live and obey from a heart of love and devotion to God.

Finally, these individuals bore fruit with patience. Patience is required here because of the trials and struggles that the plants growing from this soil faced. None of us will live this life without trials of one kind or another. Remember also, however, that there will be specific obstacles for those who seek to advance the kingdom of God and live faithfully in obedience to Him and His purpose. The fruit these plants produce is the result of patient endurance through these trials. The character of Jesus is being shaped in them through the things they suffer. The fruit of His

Spirit is being revealed through the opposition and trials of life. They shine in the darkness of this world as they stand strong amid its storms.

Verse 16

After explaining the meaning of the parable of the sower to His disciples, the Lord continues with another illustration about the Christian life. This time His illustration is about a lamp.

Jesus reminds His listeners that when people light a lamp, they place it on a stand so that it might light up as much of the surroundings as possible.

Imagine someone lighting a lamp and then covering it with a jar or putting it under a bed. What purpose would that serve?

When the Lord God lit a light in your heart and mine, it was for a purpose. That purpose is to reveal the salvation

and power of God to those we meet.
We dare not hide that light.

Verse 17

In verse 16, we see that the light is meant to shine and reveal the glory of God to the world. There is another aspect to the light God has placed in our lives, however. When God shines His light in us, it exposes what is hidden in our lives. Who among us has not had the light of God expose hidden attitudes and sins that needed to be addressed. The role of the Holy Spirit, as the light of God in the believer, is to convict us of sin and shape us into the image of Jesus Christ. He will shine His light on the darkest corners of our lives, exposing what we have hidden away and forgotten. The question we must ask ourselves is this: Are we ready to address what that light reveals?

Verse 18

What a privilege it is to have the light of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts. What we need to understand, however, is that this light places us under a greater obligation. We are carriers of the light of Christ to this world. We have the Holy Spirit in us. His light exposes our sins and shortcomings. We are now obligated to address what He reveals to us. Note how Jesus expresses this here in verse 18.

First, Jesus told His listeners that they were to be careful about how they heard what He was telling them. Imagine being told that your house was on fire and you did nothing about it. What will you do with the knowledge you have? When God speaks to you, you must not only listen to what He says but respond appropriately. The truth we hear places us under an obligation.

Second, Jesus goes on to say that the one who has will be given more. That is to say, those who receive the word and walk faithfully in it, prove themselves to be worthy of greater responsibility. On the other hand, however, those who prove unfaithful will lose what they have. Would you give more responsibility to those who have proven incapable or unfaithful in what they have? Those who are unfaithful, lose their jobs or are bypassed when it comes to promotion or greater obligations.

Verse 19

We catch a glimpse here of the large crowds that surrounded Jesus in those days. Luke recounts how Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him but they could not get through the crowd.

Verse 20

Someone in the crowd noted that Jesus' mother and brothers wanted to see Him. We are not told what they wanted. Had they simply desired to hear Him preach, they would have likely been able to hear at a distance like everyone else. It appears, however, that there was something else they needed to speak to Him about – something they considered worth interrupting His teaching and ministry for.

Verse 21

Luke does not tell us whether Jesus went to His mother and brothers to see what they wanted. What we do know is how Jesus used this simple incident to teach an important lesson. Jesus told the crowd that His true mother and brothers were those who heard the Word of God and obeyed. In particular, the Word of God that He shared with

them about His purpose and ministry. No one can claim to be a brother or sister who denies Him and the purpose of the Father through Him. Jesus does not belittle His earthly relationships here. He does, show, however, the greater priority He placed on the Kingdom of God.

Verse 22

Having travelled through the region of Galilee, Jesus now got into a boat with His disciples and told them to cross over to the other side of the lake. Verse 26 tells us that they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 23

As Jesus and His disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee, they encountered a great windstorm. Note the severity of

this storm. Their boat was filling up with water and they were in danger. Even with Jesus in the boat, the Father allowed this storm. The disciples were in the presence of Jesus in that boat while the storm raged on the sea. Having Jesus in our lives does not guarantee freedom from struggle, trial or difficulty in this world.

Verse 24

Note that Jesus was asleep in the midst of a storm that threatened to sink the boat. He was not threatened by that wind and the waves. He was at peace amid the storm. The disciples, on the other hand, were very busy trying to save themselves from sinking to the bottom. There is a rich contrast in this picture. Jesus rested in the assurance that the Father had a purpose for Him and He would die on a cross and not in the lake. The disciples believed that

somehow it was their human efforts that would save them in the end. They were about to find out something different.

Waking up Jesus, they told him that they were perishing. Jesus woke from His sleep, rebuked the wind and its raging ceased and gave way to calm.

When human efforts to battle the forces of nature proved ineffective, their human strength was failing, and hope was dwindling to nothing, the disciples turned to the only one who could resolve the problem. In an instant, at the word of His mouth, the storm ceased.

I have to admit that I have, all too often, been like these frantic disciples and placed my confidence in the flesh, only to realize that in Christ alone could I find the peace and resolution I needed.

Verse 25

When the storm ceased at Jesus' rebuke, Jesus turned to His disciples and offered them a rebuke as well, saying: "Where is your faith?"

Faith is confidence in God and His purpose. It is an assurance that He is working out that purpose for me. Faith is not telling God what to do, but rather assurance in His plan, whatever that might be. I have had times in my life when I have had to stand up against all odds to do what I believed God wanted me to do. God proved Himself faithful in those times. There are other times when God required me to stand down and surrender. Faith is trusting God's will not my own.

In asking His disciples where their faith was, Jesus was calling them to trust in the purpose of God, to look up to Him and allow their hearts to be at peace. As they stood before Jesus that day,

they were acting as if there was no God in heaven. They were demonstrating that they had no confidence in His purpose or ability to carry them through the storm. They trusted in their effort and failed to bring God into their struggle.

Jesus demonstrated the power of God in their circumstances. The disciples marveled at a power that could control even the forces of wind and water.

Verse 26

Having passed through the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and His disciples safely arrive in the country of the Gerasenes on the eastern shore. These Gerasenes were not Jewish. We have here a case of Jesus ministering outside of the borders of Israel. It is uncertain if the man Jesus encountered there was of Jewish origin.

Verse 27

As Jesus and His disciples stepped out of the boat they were met by a man from the city. Note the description of this individual. He “had demons,” was naked, and lived among the tombs. Observe that this man had not worn clothes “for a long time.”

We are not told why he did not live in a home. What is clear is that he live outside the city as an outcast.

Verse 28

Observe the response of the demon-possessed man to the presence of Jesus that day.

First, when he saw Jesus he fell down before Him. This act was a recognition of His superiority. Even demons must bow before the Lord.

Second, the man cried out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" We have no indication that this man, living naked among the tombs, had ever met or heard of Jesus before. What is clear is that the demon in Him certainly did know who Jesus was and feared Him.

This demon recognized Jesus as the Son of the Most High God. Proof of Jesus' person and mission is confirmed by His greatest enemies here. They fell before Him, recognizing Him for who He was.

Finally, observe that the demon-possessed man pleaded with Jesus not to torment him. Clearly, Jesus did not come to torment the man. The demon, however, was very afraid of what Jesus would do to him. He had the power to send him back to the pit of hell (see verse 31), and he feared to go there.

Verse 29

We have here the reason the demon pleaded with Jesus not to torment him. Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. The demon was afraid of where Jesus would send him, and he did not want to go back to the "abyss" (see verse 31).

Note what this demon was doing to the man. Luke tells us it had the power to give him extraordinary strength. When he was bound by chains and shackles the demon gave him the power to break those bonds.

Observe also, that the demon had the power to "drive him into the desert." The power of this demon was such that it could physically move this man to wherever it wanted. The demon, in effect, seemed to have taken over his body.

It is clear why this man had been bound with chains and shackles. He

was a threat to the community. The inhabitants of the community would not want him in their town so he was chained and shackled outside where he could no longer pose a threat.

Verse 30

When asked by the demon not to torment it, Jesus responded by asking its name. The demon responded by telling Jesus that its name was "Legion." The reason for this name was because the man was possessed not by one demon but by many.

We understand from this that demons, as individual beings, have names to identify them. In this case, because they were a team working together to oppress this man, they had a name for their group.

Why so many demons were assigned to this one man is uncertain. What is clear

is that together, they brought fear to the community in which he lived.

Verse 31

The demons plead with Jesus here. Though they are many, they are subject to Him. They have no power over Jesus. Note how they plead with Him not to command them to go into the abyss.

The word, abyss in the Greek language is ἀβυσσος (abassos). It is used to describe the bottomless pit in Revelation 9:

(1) And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. (2) He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the

*sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. (3) Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. – Revelation 9:1-3
ESV*

We discover from this that the bottomless pit or abyss was a place of darkness, smoke and suffering.

Revelation 20:1-3, using the same Greek word, says this about the abyss:

(1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. (2) And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive

the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. – Revelation 20:1-3 ESV

The abyss is the place where Satan is bound for one thousand years and kept from deceiving the nations.

The abyss is a place of suffering and detention. In this place, neither Satan nor his demons can exercise their powers on the earth.

Verse 32

The demons make what appears initially to be a strange request of Jesus. They beg Him to allow them to enter a herd of pigs that were feeding on the hillside. Jesus grants them permission.

We need to understand here that the pig was an unclean animal to the Jews. The law of God forbade any Jew from

eating pork. Jesus was sending these demons into an unclean animal.

Verse 33

Observe what happened to the pigs when the demons entered them. The whole herd rushed down a steep bank and fell into the Sea of Galilee and drowned.

Understand that these pigs represented a huge financial loss to their owners. This act also seems to indicate why such a huge number of demons possessed one man. He appears to be their instrument to oppress the whole region. The local people chained him up outside the city so he could not disturb them. He broke those chains, however, and continued to oppress.

When the demons were commanded to leave the man, they made a final effort to hurt the community by destroying their livelihood in these pigs.

By setting this man free from the legion of demons, Jesus was also releasing the community from their oppression as well.

Verse 34

Luke tells us that local herdsmen, upon seeing what had happened, fled to the city and countryside to inform people of the great loss.

It may be that the herdsmen were hired workers given the responsibility of caring for the pigs on behalf of their owners in the city and countryside. It may also be that a variety of herds were all in the same location being cared for by these hired herdsmen.

Verse 35

Word from the herdsmen brought people out to the pasture where the pigs had been kept. Not understanding

what had happened, they saw Jesus nearby. They came over to Him and saw the man who had been possessed by demons, sitting at His feet clothed and in his right mind.

Note their response to seeing the man healed and set free from his demons. They were afraid. This man had caused them fear and oppressed them. They had chained him but he broke free of those chains. Jesus, did something they could never have done. He set him free and made him into a new man. That kind of power brought fear to their hearts.

Verse 36

We understand from this verse that there were people present when Jesus delivered the man from his evil spirits. They shared the story of what happened and how Jesus had set him free. Likely, part of that story related to

how the demons left the man and went into the pigs, driving them over the cliff.

Verse 37

When the people heard what had happened, they asked Jesus to leave them. Luke tells us that the reason for this was that they were “seized with great fear.” That day they encountered someone more powerful than the demons of hell. They saw what He had done to the man they had chained and shackled. They were still trying to assess what had happened to their herd of pigs. What they understood was that they were in the midst of a great and fearful power. In their minds, this was a power they were unwilling to trust.

Jesus does not linger where He is not wanted. He crossed that storm-filled sea to set one person free. He

accomplished that purpose and now returned to Galilee. The trip was worth it, just for him.

Verse 38

The response of the former demon-possessed man was very different from the general population. While they begged for Jesus to leave them, He begged to go with Him. What future did he have with a people he had often oppressed? What hope did he have in a city that recognized that the demons who left him destroyed their livelihood?

It was not the purpose of Christ, however, that this man join their group. The Lord had other plans for him.

Verse 39

Jesus refused to allow the formerly demon-possessed man to accompany Him on His journeys. Instead, He told

him to return to his home and declare how much God had done for him.

Note how Jesus tells the man to “return to his home.” This may be an indication that he actually had a home in the town or city but, because of his oppression, was forced to leave.

Having received this commission from the Lord Jesus, the man went on his way proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him. He was a witness to the Lord Jesus in a town that had rejected Him and asked Him to leave.

I imagine that many saw him as a fool, but they could not deny the powerful healing he had experienced. The man who was shackled and chained naked and forced to live among the tombs outside the city now declared the glory and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have no way of knowing the impact of his shining light in that dark community. Jesus not only crossed the lake to heal

this man but also to commission him to be His representative in that region.

Verse 40

Having left a gospel worker in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee back into Israelite territory. We are left to wonder what happened through the testimony of the formerly demon-possessed man. While Jesus' focus was on the people of Israel, he delegated responsibility to this man to reach his own people.

Returning from the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus and His disciples encountered a crowd who had been waiting for their return.

Verse 41

Among those in the crowd was a man by the name of Jairus. He was a ruler

of the synagogue. As a ruler of the synagogue, he was responsible for the business and services held there and, as such, was a prominent member of society.

Note how this prominent member of Jewish society falls down at Jesus' feet. This was not only an act of desperation but one of humility, recognizing Jesus as a great man of God through whom the Father had chosen to work.

Observe the reason Jairus fell at Jesus' feet. He wanted Him to come to His house. There was a very particular reason for this request.

Verse 42

The reason Jairus requested Jesus to come to his home had to do with his only daughter of twelve years of age. She was deathly sick and he feared for her life. Jairus likely was waiting at the shore among the crowd for Jesus to

return from the country of the Gerasenes. He was a desperate man. We can imagine that there was a deep sense of urgency in His request.

Upon hearing Jairus' request, "Jesus went," with him. As Jesus travelled to Jairus' home, the crowd pressed around Him and followed. The word translated "pressed in," in the original language is συμπνίγω (sumpnígō). It means to choke or suffocate. The desire to be near Jesus was so intense it was suffocating.

Verse 43

Also among the crowd was a woman who had a "discharge of blood for twelve years." She would have been unclean as a result of this discharge. Consider the law of Moses on this matter:

(25) "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. – Leviticus 15:25 ESV

The fact that she was in the crowd was quite shocking as anyone who touched her would have become unclean as well. The law quoted above continues:

(26) Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. (27) And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be

*unclean until the evening. –
Leviticus 15:26-27 ESV*

This woman was also desperate. She had suffered from this affliction for twelve years. According to Luke, she has spent all her money going to doctors trying to find a solution to no avail. She was an unclean woman whose life was likely lonely and isolated.

Verse 44

Note what this desperate woman does. She came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of His garment. Despite her uncleanness, this act seems to be intentional. Note that she approached Him from behind and touched the fringe of His garment. The act was supposed to go unnoticed.

This woman had no right to be in the crowd. Anyone she touched, according

to the law of Moses, would have become unclean. She does not seem to be concerned about this; she just wants to be healed.

Note the result of this secret touch. According to Luke, she was “immediately” healed of her discharge. The picture is quite wonderful. An unclean woman, who defies the law of Moses touching the garment of the Master. She does not dare to face Him but secretly touches the hem of his robe. She would have likely left that crowd unnoticed had Jesus not confronted her. What is amazing here is that this simple touch was all that was required for her to be healed.

There are many secret believers today. Like this woman, they have touched the hem of His garment and quietly experienced His salvation. Many of these individuals leave the crowd without saying a word and keep this salvation to themselves. This woman,

however, would not be given this opportunity.

Verse 45

While the woman intended her touch to go unnoticed, Jesus was very aware of it. He stopped and asked, "Who was it that touched me?" People all around began to deny touching Him. Clearly, the woman herself remained quiet, intending to go unnoticed.

Peter reminded the Lord that the crowd was pressing in on Him, and it was inevitable that someone touch Him. That, however, was not the kind of touch Jesus was speaking about. Something very powerful had secretly taken place that day. The purpose of God was being unfolded in the life of someone present in that crowd. Jesus knew that this person had been set free. While you may secretly touch

Jesus, your touch is no secret to Him.
He knows those who are His.

Verse 46

Jesus was aware that someone had experienced the healing of God that day. Note how He told Peter that power had gone out from Him. Anyone who has been in ministry for any length of time understands that while we experience the strength and enabling of the Lord, there is also a cost to pay for service.

I have often experienced the strength of the Lord but I have also experienced what it means for that strength to go out from me as well. There is a physical, emotional, and physical cost to ministry. Jesus gave of Himself so that this woman could experience that healing.

Verse 47

Luke tells us that the woman who had been healed saw that she was no longer hidden. Her act had been discovered and the whole crowd waited for her to reveal herself. Jesus waited for her to confess to Him what she had done.

Finally, the woman revealed her identity and came trembling before the Lord Jesus, declaring in the presence of everyone there, that she had touched Him and was healed. Her secret act was brought out in public. Her private healing was made known to all.

Jesus required this of the woman. He demanded that she make herself known. He expected that she declare the goodness of God to those present that day. Her faith was not to be secret. She was to declare the healing of the Lord.

Are you willing to declare your faith to the crowd today? Are you willing to confess your allegiance to the Lord Jesus?

Verse 48

That day, Jesus declared His blessing on her healing. What she had stolen secretly from Him, He now publicly gives to her.

Observe how He calls her His daughter. She had openly confessed to Him and His work in her life. He now publicly declares her to be His.

Note also that Jesus makes mention of her faith. He told her that her faith had made her well. What was her faith in? It was in the person of Jesus Christ and His power to save and heal. She trusted Him when no one else could save her. She pressed through that crowd just to get to Him because she believed He alone could heal her. That faith and

confidence in Jesus was what brought her to the Saviour where she experienced His salvation and deliverance.

Note finally that Jesus sent her away in peace. She was at peace in her body because she had been delivered from her sickness. She was also at peace with Jesus because she had openly confessed her act to Him. She left at peace in body and soul.

Verse 49

Jesus was on the way to the home of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. His twelve-year-old daughter was deathly sick and in need of immediate attention. On the way, they were interrupted by a woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment. We are not told how long Jesus spent with her, but the delay proved fatal for Jairus' daughter.

Note the phrase, "While they were still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came." That individual brought the news that Jairus' daughter had died. In other words, she died as Jesus was addressing the woman who had touched His garment.

We are left to wonder how Jairus felt when Jesus was speaking to this woman and not making his way to his home. Could Jesus have arrived in time to save his child from dying? One thing is sure, the messenger who came felt that there was no more hope. The words, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore," demonstrate that in this messenger's mind, all hope was lost.

Verse 50

Jesus heard the news that Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter had died. While those present saw no more hope,

Jesus told Jairus and the messenger, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

First, Jesus told them not to fear. The fear Jesus speaks about here is a terror of death that can strip life away from a twelve-year-old child, leaving them with a sense of helplessness before this great enemy.

Second, note Jesus' words, "Only believe." What were they to believe? In this context, they were to believe in Jesus and place their confidence in Him and His power over death.

Finally, observe the promise of Jesus that his daughter would be well. There was no cause for helplessness or fear of death. Jesus had power over this great enemy. If they would trust Him, all would be well. What an encouragement this is for those facing death today.

Verse 51

Despite the news that Jairus' daughter had died, Jesus went to his home to see her. On that occasion, He went into the home with Peter, James and John. He allowed the father and the mother to be with them but did not permit anyone else to enter.

Luke does not tell us why Jesus did not allow anyone else to enter the home. Suffice it to say that this was a very private and serious matter for the family. Our Lord demonstrates compassion for the father and mother here. Away from the distraction of the crowd, this small family could have their private moment of joy and rejoicing with their daughter.

Verse 52

As they gathered around Jairus' daughter that day, the mood was

somber. Everyone was weeping and mourning over their loss.

Jesus, speaking to the family, told them not to weep because their daughter was not dead but sleeping.

Observe the phrase, "She is not dead but sleeping." We have a similar statement in John 11 regarding Lazarus:

(11) After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." (12) The disciples said to him, "Lord if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." (13) Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. – John 11:11-13 ESV

Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus had "fallen asleep." The disciples thought he was talking about resting.

John, however, clarified this by telling them that Lazarus had actually died.

This passage is important in this context because it shows us how Jesus speaks of what we call death as sleep. This young girl's heart and vital organs had ceased to function, and she was indeed physically dead. Jesus, however, was going to call her back to life and she would continue to live a normal life on this earth for years to come. Her death was not permanent. She would be woken from death and restored to life.

Verse 53

Observe that those in the house, upon hearing Jesus tell them that Jairus' daughter was asleep, laughed at him. The word translated as laugh here is καταγελᾶω (katageláō) which means to oppose, ridicule or scorn. The idea is that they were upset with Jesus and

opposed what He told them. The reason they opposed him in this matter was because they “knew, this child was dead.”

Consider these words in the context of what Jesus had just told the parents and His disciples in verse 50:

(50) But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.” – Luke 8:50 ESV

We are left to wonder what kind of belief those present had that day. They still had no hope. They mocked Jesus when He said she was only asleep. Any faith they had, seems to be very small at this point.

Verse 54

Despite the lack of faith among those present that day, Jesus went over to

the young girl, took her by the hand and spoke to her, saying, "Child, arise."

There was nothing fancy about what Jesus did that day. He just spoke two words.

The first word was addressed to the young girl. He called out to her particularly. The word "child" made it clear that Jesus was speaking to her.

The second word was a command. The word, "arise" told this young girl what she was to do.

Verse 55

When Jesus spoke the words, "Child, arise," Luke tells us that her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Consider this for a moment.

How could this young girl, lying dead in the home, hear and respond to the words of Jesus? The only way was for her spirit to return. Without that spirit,

she would remain unresponsive. The one who commanded her to rise restored her spirit and empowered her to respond. The Lord who calls us will miraculously give us the ability to do what He asks us to do.

Notice the response of the young girl. She got up at once. She rose up from the dead in response to the call of Jesus and stood before those present, living and breathing.

Observe how Jesus commanded that they give her something to eat. Jesus rose her from the dead but she also needed to be sustained by her parents through the provision of physical food. Jesus commissions them to care for her and provide for her physical needs.

Verse 56

Jairus and his wife were amazed at what had taken place that day. The word translated as “amazed” is derived

from two Greek words. The first is "ek" meaning out or outside. The second is "hístēmi" meaning to stand. Together they convey the sense of standing outside. The idea is that they were standing so far outside of what was normal and ordinary that they could not understand or relate to what had taken place.

Despite their amazement, Jesus commands the parents not to tell anyone what had happened. There may be any number of reasons why Jesus did not want them to share this miracle.

It may have been that this miracle was just for them and no one else. Its purpose was not to demonstrate the power of Jesus to the crowd but rather to restore a young girl to her family.

It may also be that Jesus wanted to regulate what was happening around Him. News of what Jesus did that day would spread. People would come from all over demanding that He come to

their house to raise their dead or heal their loved ones. This was not the will of the Father for Him. Jesus had work to do and needed to be focused on that task.

LUKE 9

Verse 1

To this point, Jesus and His disciples have been together. These men had watched Him minister and learned from Him. It was now time for them to put these lessons into practice. Luke tells us that Jesus called the twelve disciples and gave them power and authority over demons and diseases. Notice two details here.

First Jesus called His disciples. The initiative came from Jesus. He had a task for these men to do and called them to go in His name. While we are all called to be servants of the Lord, the call of Jesus here was a very specific

one. He had a task for them to do and they went under His orders. Imagine what it would be like if each of us did whatever we wanted to do. There would be pastors who were never called to be pastors. There would be missionaries on the field who should be in their home country in a secular job. God has a purpose for our lives. He calls some to be pastors, some to be missionaries and some to be His servants in other professions in life. What is important is that we know this call of God on our lives.

Second, observe that not only did Jesus call the disciples to perform a specific task but He also equipped them for that task. This is the problem with doing something we were never called to do. God equips those He calls.

Understand here that we need this power to do the work God has called us to do. We dare not go out without this enabling. We are powerless without it.

Let those who know the call of God be aware also of this empowering.

Note finally that this power was very specific. It came in two forms.

First they were given power over demons and diseases. The word power is δύναμις (dúnamis). It indicates that Christ gave them the ability or capacity to deal with demons and diseases.

Second, Christ also gave the disciples authority. The word ἐξουσία (exousía) speaks of permission and right. You can have the power to do something but not the right. In this case, Jesus not only gave the disciples the power but also the permission to act in His name.

Note the specific nature of this power and permission. They were to use these gifts of God to address both demons and diseases. It is quite likely that these disciples went out declaring the coming of the kingdom, Jesus, however, gave them particular power

and authority to demonstrate the coming of the kingdom through the healing of diseases and casting out of demons.

Verse 2

The call and empowering of Jesus on the twelve disciples was for a particular reason. Verse 1 tells us that they were given power and authority over demons and diseases. Note that Luke tells us that with this call and empowerment in their lives, these men went out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Observe how proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing were to walk hand in hand. The presence of the kingdom of God is not just a doctrine to be preached from the pulpit but, more particularly, a reality to be experienced in the church. Where that kingdom of

God is, there is healing. What is the nature of that healing?

There is healing in our relationship with God and a restoration of relationships between brother and sister. There is evidence of God's presence touching our bodies, souls and spirits. God's presence is life-giving and healing. If you preach the kingdom of God from the pulpit but see no evidence of this in the lives of the people in your church, there is a problem. We must not only proclaim the coming kingdom but also see evidence of it in the lives of His people.

Verse 3

Observe something else here in the Lord's call upon the lives of His twelve disciples. They were not to take anything for their journey. They were not to take staff for protection, no bread for their hunger, no money for

their physical needs, and no extra tunic to keep them warm. They were to be completely dependent upon the Lord their God for everything.

Understand here that this was not just a command for when they left but also for how they were to exercise their ministry. Imagine the disciples leaving the presence of Jesus with nothing and they come to their first preaching point, take up an offering and leave with a big bag of money and provision for their journey. Would they not be living in disobedience to the command of Jesus who told them not to take bread or money?

It was not the will of Jesus that His disciples be weighted down with these things of the world or concern for these earthly possessions. He wanted them to be free of these worries and trust Him for the provision for each day. In doing so, they demonstrated not only the call

and power of the Lord upon their lives but His provision as well.

Verse 4

In those days, travelling preachers depended on the hospitality of the people in the communities where they worked. Note how Jesus told the disciples that when they were offered hospitality they were to go to that home and remain there until they left the community.

Imagine the disciples arrived in a community and were offered hospitality by an individual in the community. The accommodation was adequate but not luxurious. As they minister in the community a person with more luxurious facilities offers them hospitality. The temptation would be to leave the inferior accommodations to benefit from the luxury now offered. Jesus tells them that they are not to be

tempted by these things. Instead, they were to be content to stay in whatever accommodations the Lord provided first. Their focus was not on their comfort but on the work God had given them to do.

Verse 5

There would be towns that would not receive the disciples or their message. When the message they preached was not received in that town, Jesus told the disciples to “shake off the dust” from their feet as a testimony against them.

By shaking off the dust from their feet, the disciples were demonstrating their contempt for that town. They didn’t even want to carry that dust that accumulated on their feet by walking through it to any other place in the nation, lest it be contaminated by their uncleanness.

It was not the purpose of Jesus for these disciples to debate those who rejected the message of the Kingdom of God. While later in the history of the church, men like Paul would take time in such communities to debate and seek to convince the people of the truth, this was not the will of Jesus for these disciples. This shows us that God not only calls, and empowers but He also has a purpose for us in what He wants us to do. This differs from person to person. In this case, these twelve disciples were not to linger where they were not wanted.

Verse 6

Luke tells us that the twelve disciples went as Jesus told them. They moved through the villages, preaching the gospel of Jesus and healing those who came to them with diseases.

Observe that preaching and healing walk hand in hand here. It is good to know the truth but it must also have an impact on our lives. He who sits under the message of the kingdom and is not changed by it is not experiencing the power of that truth to heal.

To know the gospel is not enough. Its truth must heal our relationship with God and our brothers and sisters. The kingdom of God will push back the forces of Satan and his hold on our bodies, minds and souls.

Verse 7

Luke speaks here about Herod. This was the Herod who put John the Baptist to death. He was a Roman leader in Galilee. Mark 6:14 calls him king. As a Roman king, however, he was under the authority of the emperor.

Herod saw the powerful things that were happening in the land. People

were being healed and set free from demonic activity in their lives. The gospel was preached from village to village. All these things perplexed him. People he talked with about these events were likely also confused. Some of them believed that John the Baptist had risen from the dead and was going about healing and casting out demons. This concerned Herod and he was likely somewhat fearful of the possibility that John could be alive again. At this point, Herod did not know the Lord Jesus or understand that He was the one John had spoken about.

Verse 8

Another possibility proposed by the crowd was that Jesus was Elijah. The prophet Malachi prophesied of the coming of Elijah:

*(5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
(6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." – Malachi 4:5-6 ESV*

Those who believed Jesus was Elijah likely felt that he may be the fulfillment of that prophecy of Malachi.

Still, others believed that Jesus was one of the great prophets of old who had risen from the dead and returned.

Note from these verses that no one believed that anyone from their generation could be so empowered by God. They could not conceive that anyone alive in their day could do such miracles. The power they were seeing, however, was indeed the result of God enabling His Servant in that generation

for their eyes to see. That same power had been given to the twelve disciples who went from village to village demonstrating the presence of the Kingdom of God.

There are many, like Herod's counsellors, who believe that God worked in wonderful ways in days gone by, but they have no expectation of that work in their generation. Their eyes are closed to the power of God being demonstrated in such a way in their day and their lives.

Verse 9

There were many ideas about who Jesus was. Note Herod's response to all these proposals.

First, Herod said, "John I beheaded." Herod was not convinced that John the Baptist had risen from the dead. He does not seem to believe someone could rise from the dead. He had seen

John's head and was convinced he was dead and so the individual moving about Galilee was not John the Baptist.

Second, Herod said, "Who is this about whom I hear such things?" Herod's curiosity was peaked. There was something about this man and His power that caused Herod to want to know more about Him. Luke tells us that Herod determined to see this man Jesus. He was not content to listen to what others said about Jesus, He needed to meet Him and make his own conclusions.

A faith that is based on what other people say alone, is not Biblical faith. Biblical faith is personal and based on our own encounter with the living Christ.

Verse 10

The twelve disciples had been travelling through various villages and towns

preaching the gospel and healing those who came to them with demons and diseases. When they returned to Jesus, they related to Him what had happened during their travels. We can only imagine the excitement they expressed in their reports to Jesus. Their faith would have been stretched and become very personal to them as they recounted how the Spirit of God had empowered them in the work to which Jesus had called them.

Luke tells us that when the disciples returned, Jesus withdrew with them to Bethsaida. Luke does not tell us the reason for this “withdrawal.” It may have been to have personal time with them and to give them time to rest and reflect on what God had done.

Verse 11

Notice the phrase, “When the crowds learned it.” The implication is that when

Jesus withdrew to Bethsaida, He did not inform the crowds. This may have been so that He and His disciples could have time alone.

Luke does not tell us how long Jesus was alone with His disciples but the crowds eventually learned where they were and made their way to Him. Jesus welcomed this crowd and did what He had commissioned His disciples to do; he spoke to them about the kingdom of God and demonstrated the power of that kingdom by curing those who needed healing.

The church of our day must also be reminded of these two vital ministries. The preaching of the kingdom of God and the curing of those who need healing are both essential ingredients in the work of the church in our day as well. The church needs to faithfully proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ without compromise. It must also be a place of healing where those who are

wounded can come and experience the power of that gospel to heal the brokenness of all forms. Truth without power is mere intellectualism. The power without truth is mere hedonism. A healthy church is one where the truth of God and its power to transform lives work together in perfect harmony and balance. We have seen churches that have preached the truth but have no expectation of that truth. We have also seen churches that have healed the needy but have no foundation of truth for those people to stand on once they have been healed. We need churches that stand firmly on the truth of God's word and who have a deep expectation that that truth will change lives and bring the healing we need.

Verse 12

From verse 11 we see that Jesus has been speaking to the crowd about the

Kingdom of God and healing the sick. We are not told how long this went on but Luke tells us that the day was coming to an end and they were in a “desolate place” away from shops and accommodations.

As the evening drew near, the disciples approached Jesus and asked Him to send the crowd into the surrounding villages to find something to eat and a place to stay overnight.

Verse 13

Jesus’ response to the disciple’s request to send the people into the surrounding villages for food must have been surprising. “You give them something to eat,” He told them.

The disciples, somewhat taken aback by Jesus’ request, responded, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.”

The idea of buying food for five thousand men (see verse 14) was an impossibility in the minds of these disciples. Unless they took up an offering from everyone present, they did not have the money required to feed this group. Jesus was placing them before a humanly impossible situation.

Verse 14

Luke tells us that there were five thousand men present on that occasion. We can see just how difficult it would have been to feed such a group at the best of times.

Jesus asked the disciples to go out among the crowd and have them sit down in groups of about fifty each. Having the crowd sitting down would have facilitated the distribution of food as it would have stopped their movement. It would also provide a separation between groups of people

allowing the disciples to move more freely among them. Finally, it would have facilitated the counting of how many were in that crowd as each of the groups had about fifty people in it.

Verse 15

The disciples did as Jesus told them to do and went out among the crowd organizing them in groups of about fifty each. Remember that they had only five loaves of bread and two fish.

When the crowd was asked to sit down in groups of fifty, the natural response was to expect something to happen. The disciples understood that they were to feed these people, and so this act of sitting them down not only created in the crowd a sense of expectation but placed the disciples under an obligation. They placed themselves under this obligation through a simple act of obedience to

Jesus. They did not have any understanding, however, of how this need was going to be met.

Verse 16

Note what Jesus does here.

First, He took what was available to Him that day. In this case, it was five loaves of bread and two fish.

Second, Jesus looks up to heaven. There was a common understanding that God dwelt in the heavens. Hezekiah is depicted in 2 Chronicles 32 as praying to heaven:

(20) Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. – 2 Chronicles 32:20 ESV

Jesus spoke of the work of John as being from heaven in Matthew 21:

(25) The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' – Matthew 21:25 ESV

Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God in Matthew 19:23 as the "kingdom of heaven."

The apostle John prophesied that the Holy City would come down from heaven from God in Revelation 21:

(2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. – Revelation 21:2 ESV

All of this shows us that when Jesus looked up to heaven, He was looking up to His Father.

By looking up to the Father, the Lord Jesus is committing what He was about to do to Him. What was about to take place was a work of both the Father and the Son.

Third, Jesus blessed the loaves and fish. In blessing it, Jesus set it apart for the purpose of the Father. In this case, the Father's purpose was that this food nourish the five thousand men present, bring glory to His name and strengthens the faith of those present for His honour.

Having committed everything to the glory of God, Jesus then broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to bring to the crowd. I have always wondered what that bread looked like when it reached each group of fifty. Did the disciple hand a small piece of bread to each crowd to share among themselves? Did that bread multiply before it arrived? We don't have answers to this.

Verse 17

The bread that was distributed to the people that day “satisfied” their hunger. Luke tells us that “they all ate and were satisfied.” While the meal was simple, it addressed the hunger that everyone present felt. Jesus would describe Himself in the Gospel of John as being the bread of life:

(35) Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. – John 6:35 ESV

Jesus often spoke in parables. Here, however, was a parable acted out before the people. He offered them bread that would satisfy them. That bread was His life.

Observe here that there was more bread in the end than there was in the

beginning. Twelve basketfuls were gathered up after everyone had enough. You cannot exhaust the supply of God. The more it is used the more it multiplies. We can only imagine what the disciples felt as they looked at the twelve baskets of bread that were left over after they had fed the entire multitude.

Verse 18

Luke describes a scene where Jesus was alone praying and the disciples were with Him. How can someone be alone with other people present? The idea seems to be that Jesus and His disciples were together in one place but Jesus separated Himself from them for a time of prayer. Prayer was an important aspect of Jesus' life. If Jesus was God, why would He need to pray? Understand here that Jesus needed this time to be in communion with His

Father. In John 12 He tells us that the Father told Him "what to say and what to speak."

(49) For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. – John 12:49 ESV

Luke 22 opens up a window for us to see one of these times of prayer with the Father:

(41) And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, (42) saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (43) And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. (44) And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of

*blood falling down to the ground. –
Luke 22:41-44 ESV*

Note two things in this prayer of Jesus.

First, Jesus sought the will of the Father in these times of prayer. Second, Jesus was comforted by the Father and the angels as He agonized in these moments.

Jesus needed these times with the Father for direction and comfort. He drew wisdom, guidance and support from the Father in these moments.

Completing His time of prayer, Jesus approached the disciples and asked them an important question: "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

Jesus already knew the answer to this question. He had heard what they were saying about Him. The purpose of the question is not to obtain an answer to something He did not know as it was to stir up the thoughts of the disciples.

Verse 19

The disciples answered Jesus' question about who the crowd believed Him to be. Generally, there were three schools of thought.

First, some believed Him to be John the Baptist. While we know that John had been beheaded by Herod, these people believed that he had risen from the dead and went about preaching (see Luke 9:7).

Second, others believed that Jesus was Elijah. The prophet Micah prophesied this about "Elijah:"

(5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

(6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with

*a decree of utter destruction.” –
Malachi 4:5-6 ESV*

Malachi predicted that Elijah would come before the great day of the Lord. Jesus told His disciples that this prophesied Elijah was John the Baptist (see Matthew 17:10-13). Many, however, who did not see John as the Elijah to come believed instead that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy of Malachi.

The final school of thought saw Jesus as some unnamed prophet of old risen from the dead.

For the most part, the people in Jesus' day did not see Him for who He really was. We can only imagine how this grieved the Lord.

Verse 20

Turning to His disciples, Jesus asked them who they believed Him to be. It

was Peter who responded on behalf of the twelve declaring him to be the Christ of God.

The word Christ is Χριστός (Christós). It comes from the word chríō, meaning to anoint. In the Scriptures an individual was anointed for a particular task. This anointing took place before God and according to His will and purpose. The term Christ, referred to the anointed one or the Messiah who was to come according to the prophetic word of the Old Testament. In speaking of Jesus as the Christ of God, Peter is declaring Him to be “the anointed Messiah” prophesied through the ages by the prophets of old.

Verse 21

Peter had just declared Jesus to be the “Christ of God” (see verse 20). Note, however, that Jesus told His disciples that they were not to tell this to

anyone. Observe the phrase used here—"he strictly charged and commanded them."

The words translated "strictly charged" come from the Greek word ἐπιτιμᾶω (epitimáō) which implies a strong admonition or to forbid with all urgency. It is a strong word that is sometimes used to sharply rebuke another person for something they have done.

The other word used here is the word command. It is the Greek word παραγγέλλω (paraggéllō) meaning to declare or to give an order. Again this is a strong word given as an order to be obeyed at all costs. The reason for this may be seen, in part, in verse 22.

Verse 22

Observe how the verse begins with the word, "saying." This connects it with the command of Jesus in verse 21 not to tell anyone that He was the Christ of

God. Note what Jesus tells His disciples here and its connection to verse 21.

First, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of Man. The title "Son of Man" is used in Daniel 7:

(13) "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

(14) And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. – Daniel 7:13-14 ESV

The Son of Man in Daniel's vision came with the clouds of heaven and was given dominion, glory, and an

everlasting kingdom over all peoples, nations and languages. The fulfillment of that vision is in the person of Jesus Christ who came to set up His Kingdom in the hearts and lives of all who would surrender to Him. Jesus' use of this term confirms Peter's statement that He was the "Christ" or anointed one of God to reign as King over this Kingdom of God.

Second, the Christ of God or the Son of Man would suffer many things and be rejected by the religious leaders. Jesus did not expect the religious leaders of His day to accept Him as Daniel's prophesied "Son of Man."

Third, Jesus, as the Son of Man, would be killed. Jesus knew that this would happen. He had come for this purpose. While killed by those who rejected Him, His death would draw men to Him to become part of His Kingdom.

Finally, observe that Jesus told His disciples that he would not remain dead

but rise victorious over the grave,
giving hope to us all that we, too,
through Him, might also have victory.

The declaration of Jesus being the Christ of God would only create controversy and stir up the religious leaders of the day. Jesus preached about the kingdom in parables. He demonstrated the coming of the kingdom by His acts. As the Spirit of God worked through that preaching, individuals were coming to their own conclusions based on what they saw and heard. Jesus was not interested in riling people up needlessly. This would not accomplish the purpose of the Father but only create tension and conflict. His role was to preach and demonstrate the kingdom. The Spirit of God would bring conviction.

There is a time to speak the truth and a time to withhold the truth. We need the wisdom of God not only to know the

truth but also when and how to proclaim it.

Verse 23

Having stated that He would be rejected and killed by the people He came to save, Jesus moved on to tell His disciples what it would be like to follow after Him. Notice His words here.

First, observe the phrase, "If anyone would come after me." The word "if" is significant and implies a condition. In other words, those who are determined to follow Jesus would have to meet a requirement. This is not an option but a necessity.

Second, what is the requirement for following Jesus? Jesus tells His disciples that it is the denial of self. To deny self is to put Jesus and His purpose first in one's life. He is Lord and there is no room for competition. His command must be obeyed even if it means great

sacrifice or trial. There is no room for questioning His authority. You must be willing to lay down your life for Him if you are going to follow after Him.

Third, those who follow Jesus must take up their cross daily. What did it mean for Jesus to take up His cross? It meant death and great suffering. Those who follow Him must be willing to do likewise. It is a requirement of every follower of Jesus to be willing to die for their Saviour. Note that this taking up of our cross is a daily activity. Every day I wake up, I must commit myself to His Lordship over that day and its circumstances. I must surrender completely to His will alone. When He takes my day in a way I did not want it to go, I accept His purpose and walk in absolute confidence and godliness. When temptations arise, I die to my own ideas and seek His will instead. Every day is a fresh surrender to His Lordship in my life.

Understand here that this is not just for the exceptional believer but for anyone who wants to follow the Lord. "If" you want to follow Him, you must die to yourself and daily pick up your cross of absolute surrender to Him and His ways. These are the minimum standards for being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Verse 24

In verse 23 Jesus declared that anyone who wanted to follow Him must deny himself and pick up His cross daily. This is not only the minimum standard for being a servant of Jesus. It is also the only way we can truly know life.

Consider the word "life" here. We experience life in the flesh. We eat, work and sleep. We know pleasure, difficulty, tiredness and many other things.

Consider also, however, the words of Jesus in John 14:

(6) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. – John 14:6 ESV

He says something similar in John 11:25:

(25) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" – John 11:25-26 ESV

In both of these verses, the Lord Jesus tells us that He is life. While we all depend on Him to sustain our physical life, this is not the life Jesus speaks about here. There is a spiritual life given to all who believe. Jesus tells us

in John 11:26 that those who know this life will never die. While our outer shell will one day cease to exist, the inner life of Christ in us will continue on into eternity. It is in this context that we can understand what Jesus is saying here in this verse.

According to Jesus, those who wish to save their lives will lose them. That is to say, if you are focused on preserving your physical life with all its desires, passions and appetites and refuse to take up your cross to follow Jesus, know that the day will come when you will be forced to lay everything down in death. You cannot keep this life. When it is all over, you will then stand before the Lord you have rejected to give an account to Him. There you will receive your sentence of eternal suffering and death.

If, on the other hand, you are ready to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Jesus, the outcome will be very

different. Jesus tells us that those who are willing to pick up their cross to follow Him will save their lives. To save their lives in this sense is to know eternal life in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is to know His presence in this life as well as in the life to come. It is to be free from the condemnation and curse of sin.

While our outer shell will perish in the grave, those who belong to Jesus Christ will go on to experience this eternal life with Him. Those who reject Him, however, will know the condemnation of eternal death and suffering.

Verse 25

In light of the truth of verses 23 and 24, Jesus goes on to remind His listeners that they can gain the whole world and experience all its pleasures and delights, but one day, all this will

be laid down in death and then will come the judgement.

If there were no eternity or God to whom we were accountable, then we could understand that the enjoyment of this world would give meaning and purpose to life. Those who understand, however, that there is a holy and righteous Creator who has created us for a purpose, know that there is greater meaning in life than this world and its delights. As wonderful as these things may be, there is something more. These individuals live for eternity and to please their Creator. They know a meaning to life that goes beyond what this world alone can give.

To live this life only for what this earth can give is to miss out on the greater purpose of God. It is to perish without hope of eternity and everlasting joy in the presence of a Saviour. It is to be satisfied with the temporary and sacrifice the eternal.

Verse 26

One of the reasons why people reject the Lord and live for this earth instead has to do with being ashamed of Jesus and His words. Those who are ashamed of Jesus love the praise of men and their reputation more than Jesus. They delight in status, pleasures and riches more than the Son of Man. Their great desire is to be seen and recognized.

What does Jesus have to say to these individuals? He tells them that because they were ashamed of Him, He would be ashamed of them when He came in all His glory with His holy angels. When He comes to set up His Kingdom, these people will have no part in it. They will have no place of honour but will be condemned and driven away.

Verse 27

Jesus made an astonishing prediction here. He told His followers that some standing among them that day would not taste death until they saw the kingdom of God. How are we to understand what Jesus is saying here? There are a variety of interpretations possible.

First, consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:28:

(28) But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. – Matthew 12:28 ESV

Note how Jesus connects the Spirit of God's presence with the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Spirit of Christ came to dwell in the hearts of those who belonged to Jesus. The death of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sin through His atonement made this possible. The Spirit comes as Lord of

our lives, cleansing, renewing and equipping those who belong to Christ in life and service. Through these equipped individuals the kingdom of God advances on this earth. It is possible that Jesus was telling His listeners that the coming of the Holy Spirit, empowering believers to live and serve would be evidence of the Kingdom of God on this earth. That coming would be at Pentecost as described in the book of Acts.

Others interpret this statement of Jesus in the context of what would happen after this declaration. In verse 28, Luke describes the transfiguration of Jesus and evidence of the glory of God upon His life. This, they see, as evidence of the kingdom of God on this earth. Three of Jesus' disciples would see that transfiguration.

Finally, for the kingdom of God to be established on this earth, Jesus needed to die so that forgiveness and pardon

could be obtained. Some commentators believe that the reference of Jesus here is to His crucifixion and the door opening through this for the gospel to go out to the ends of the earth. If that is the case, then individuals present in that crowd would have been witnesses to this great event that established the right for all who believed to become children of God and members of His Kingdom.

Verse 28

Eight days after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, or anointed one of God, Jesus took him along with John and James up to a mountain to pray. We understand from the context that Jesus would be transfigured when He was on that mountain. Luke tells us, however, that Jesus' intention in going to the mountain was to pray. These times of prayer were very important for Him. In

bringing these disciples with Him, Jesus was showing them just how important this practice was.

Verse 29

As Jesus prayed on that mountain, something happened to Him. Luke, tells us that His appearance changed in two ways.

First, Jesus' face was altered. The word appearance is translated from the Greek word πρόσωπον (prósōpon). The word is derived from "prós," meaning toward, and "ōps," meaning the eyes or face. The idea is that something in His face changed. Luke does not go into detail about the nature of that change and we can only speculate as to what had changed in his facial appearance. Suffice it to say that there was something in Jesus' face that day that made you notice.

The apostle John, in his vision, describes the face of the glorified Christ as he returned to judge:

(15) Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, (16) calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, (17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" – Revelation 6:15-17 ESV

We see here that His face brought fear to the kings of the earth.

Writing about the "first and the last, the living one who died and is alive forever more," (Revelation 1:17-18) John says:

(12) Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, (13) and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. (14) The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, (15) his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. (16) In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. – Revelation 1:12-16 ESV

Observe that John describes the face of this one who died and is alive forevermore as being “like the sun shining in full strength.”

While it is unclear from the verse how Jesus' appearance changed, these verses show us something of the glory of the face of the risen Lord. It is possible that some of this was revealed in Jesus' face that day.

Observe second that Jesus' clothing became dazzling white. The word "dazzling" here is ἐξαστράπτω (exastráptō) derived from "ek," meaning out, and "astráptō" meaning to flash. The idea is that the brilliance of His clothes flashed out or shone like a bright light dazzling the eyes. The colour white is usually a symbol of purity in Scripture. It appears that the glory and majesty of God shone through the person of Christ that day and was visible to the three disciples present with Him. This majestic glory was hidden from them in their daily encounters with Jesus, but here on the mountain, they caught a glimpse of the

divine and glorious nature of their Lord and Friend.

Verse 30

As the disciples watched, two other men appeared with Jesus to speak to Him. While the disciples had never met these men personally, it was revealed to them who they were. Both Moses and Elijah stood there in the presence of Jesus speaking to Him.

The picture here is striking. Moses was the one God used to bring the law to Israel. Elijah was one of the first prophets. These two men represented the Law and the Prophets. As they stand in the presence of Jesus and converse with Him, there is no animosity or argument. They are in harmony with the Lord Jesus. This is because the law Moses gave, pointed to Jesus as its fulfillment. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin and restored the

relationship between God and His people. Jesus was also the fulfillment of the prophetic word of the Old Testament as spoken by Elijah and all the prophets after him. He was the prophesied Messiah and Saviour for His people. There before the disciples was a picture of Jesus, Moses and the prophets in perfect harmony, with one message and one purpose being fulfilled in one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only imagine how much this would have reassured the disciples of the message Jesus declared to them.

Verse 31

Note here that Moses and Elijah, who spoke with Jesus, also appeared in glory. These men were heavenly in appearance. The glory of God shone through them as His representatives. This would have conveyed to the disciples that both the Law of Moses

and the prophetic word of Elijah and the prophets after him were from God.

Note here what these men spoke about, according to Luke. They discussed the “departure” of Jesus, which “he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” The word departure here is ἐξοδος (éxodos) meaning going out or to exit. It refers to the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. They talked about how Jesus would leave this world and return to the Father.

Remember that the law of Moses was filled with sacrifices for the sins of God’s people, and they looked forward to the final sacrifice that would end all sacrifices. The prophets predicted the rejection and death of the “Christ of God.” Together they spoke about this wonderful purpose of the Father for the salvation of His people through the death of the Christ. Consider two details here.

First, consider how this conversation would have blessed the Lord Jesus who was about to die a horrible death on the cross. Consider how it would have reaffirmed the purpose of God for the salvation of His people through Him. We see different times in the Scriptures where God encourages His Son in the task before Him. He sent angels to minister to Him after His temptation. He declared Him to be the Son in whom He was well pleased at His baptism. Here, He encouraged Him through this conversation with Moses and Elijah before laying down His life for our sins.

Second, consider how this conversation, which the disciples must have heard, prepared them for what was ahead. They had heard from Moses how this "departure" was the final sacrifice required for the sin of the world. They listened to Elijah declare Jesus' "exodus" from this world as a fulfillment of the words of the prophets.

We can only imagine how what they saw that day would have blessed and encouraged them in the times following the death of the Lord Jesus. This encounter would have given them great assurance and authority in preaching Christ as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

Verse 32

Note here how, while Jesus prayed, the disciples were heavy with sleep. This seems to be a recurring theme in the Scriptures. Our physical bodies are limited in their ability. We find ourselves often asleep when we should be praying.

Luke tells us, however, that seeing Elijah and Moses with Jesus woke the disciples from their sleep so they were “fully awake” and “saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.”

The importance of this verse is quite clear. Luke reassures us that while the disciples did fall asleep on the mountain that day, they were “fully awake” when they saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah. This was not a dream or vision but something that literally took place, witnessed by three people who recount the same story.

Verse 33

Note the response of Peter to what he saw that day. Luke tells us that “as the men were parting from him,” Peter suggested that they make three tents. These tents would be for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Observe here how Luke goes on to say that Peter did not really know what he said.

The word Peter uses for “tents” here is σκηνή (skēnē) which can refer to a booth, a hut or even a tabernacle. The passage does not tell us Peter’s

motivation here. We do have, however, some details that may help us understand what Peter was suggesting.

First, Luke tells us that Peter did not know what he said. The idea here is that his reasoning was faulty. The building of three tents was not in the purpose of God.

Second, we are left to wonder how Peter was using the word σκηνή (skēnē) here. The word describes anything from a simple tent for shelter to a tabernacle for worship.

Was Peter seeking to build a shelter for the three men present that day?

Clearly, Peter saw that they were of heavenly origin, and what kind of sheltering tent, made from materials available to them on the mountain, would have done any of these men honour? In fact, would these men even require any shelter? Did Peter really think that he could offer these men

anything that would make their lives more comfortable?

Was it possible that Peter wanted to provide a crude earthly shelter for these heavenly beings to keep them on the mountain in his presence? Why would these men of heavenly origin, want to remain in a simple tent on earth when heaven was their dwelling place? Was Peter so overwhelmed with what he saw that day that his thoughts went in this direction?

The other possibility is that the word tent, in the mind of Peter was not a simple shelter but a tabernacle to honour these men. Was it Peter's intention to build a memorial so that the occasion could be remembered? Was it his purpose to build something that would honour their glory and contribution to the faith of God's people? If this was his intention, he was putting Moses and Elijah at the same level as the Lord Jesus who

fulfilled their words and ministry. Jesus alone deserved the glory.

While we are not told what Peter was thinking here, we are told that his intention was based on ignorance and not on the will of God.

Verse 34

Luke tells us that as Peter was contemplating the construction of three simple tents for the men present, a cloud overshadowed them. Consider the contrast here. Peter wanted to build something from twigs and leaves to shelter these three men but God came down in His glorious presence to overshadow them instead. The contrast between Peter's tent and the overshadowing presence of God is striking. The glory of that overshadowing presence was so overwhelming that the disciples were afraid even to enter it.

What can we offer God that He does not have already in abundance? What is our human effort compared to the resources available to us in Christ? How often, however, have we trusted in earthly tents when the overshadowing presence of the Lord can be our protection.

Verse 35

Not only did the overshadowing presence of the Lord fill the mountaintop but the disciples heard a voice coming out of the cloud saying: "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

Peter wanted to make three tents that day –one for each of these men. The voice coming from the cloud corrected him, however. There was only one person they were to listen to. That person is described as "my Son, my Chosen One."

The law was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Any attempt to seek salvation through the law of Moses would only end in failure. The prophets all looked forward to Jesus and found their fulfillment in Him. There was only one person in that group of three who was worthy of honour and glory — the Son and Chosen One, Jesus Christ. The voice of God pointed to Jesus as the only Saviour and hope. In Him alone was forgiveness and authority. All eyes were to be fixed on Him.

Verse 36

When the voice had finished speaking, the disciples looked up and saw Jesus alone. Moses and Elijah had disappeared. Moses surrendered his laws to the person of Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice would bring full salvation to all who believed. Elijah, as a representative of the prophets,

rejoiced in the fact that the prophecy of the Old Testament found its fulfillment in the Lord, who stood with Him that day. Jesus alone remained as the hope of the world.

Luke tells us that Peter, James and John remained silent about what took place on the mountain in those days. They did not share what they had seen with others. Obviously, this silence would eventually be broken. It may be that the experience was so overwhelming these men did not know how to share it with others. It may also have been that they were trying to digest what had taken place and its significance and were unable to truly share what they did not yet fully understand. It is possible that Jesus also told them to be silent about this matter until after He had risen from the dead, as the news of such an encounter would have upset many of the religious leaders of the day who

would not have been willing to accept that Jesus was greater than Moses and the prophets.

Verse 37

After the transfiguration, and His three disciples came down from the mountain. There at its foot was a “great crowd” to greet them with all their needs. These crowds seemed to give Jesus no rest. They constantly demanded His attention.

Verse 38

Among the crowd was a man who pleaded with Jesus to look at his son, an only child. The fact that his son was an only child made this matter of deep concern for the father. The loss of this child would be significant.

Verse 39

The father describes to Jesus the problem his son struggled with here. A spirit would seize his son, make him cry out, have convulsions and foam at the mouth. The experience is described as “shattering” and required that the parents remain with their child regularly to care for him during these episodes.

The word translated spirit is πνεῦμα (pneúma). It literally means to breathe but can also refer to a breeze or gust of wind. It came also to refer to the spirit of man that resulted from God breathing life into him. It is that part of us that is separate from the physical body but gives life to that body. It may also refer to beings without a body, such as demonic or heavenly spirits.

The man is describing a condition, that could not be attributed to a physical illness, affecting his son’s body. Clearly, no medication or doctor could cure what this child was experiencing.

Verse 40

Observe how the man told Jesus that he had begged His disciples to cast this spirit out of His son but they could not do so.

It may be that while Jesus, Peter, James and John were on the mountain, the other disciples were busy with the crowd. At this point in their ministry, all the disciples appear to be ministering to the people who came to see Jesus.

The disciples, who had already healed people and cast out demons (see Luke 9:6), were, according to this man, unable to cast out this spirit that afflicted the man's son. They could not heal this boy, even though Jesus had given them authority over demons and the ability to cure diseases:

(1) And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to

*cure diseases, (2) and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. – Luke 9:1-2
ESV*

The disciple's inability to heal this boy would have been a humbling experience for them and reminded them that their authority was not infinite.

Verse 41

Jesus responds to the word that the disciples could not heal this man's son. Note several details in this verse.

First, the phrase "Jesus answered" seems to be directed toward a "faithless and twisted generation." Included in that generation were the man who came to speak to Jesus about his child and possibly even the disciples who also struggled with their understanding and obedience to Christ.

Second, observe the question, "How long am I to be with you and bear with you?"

Jesus would be with them until He was crucified, and rose from the dead. The only way He would return to the Father was through the cross. In saying, "How long am I to be with you," Jesus is referring to his death. He seems to be saying something like this: "How long will it be before I lay down my life to remedy this horrible problem that causes these people to live faithless and twisted lives under the curse of sin, sickness and death?"

The word translated "bear with" is ἀνέχω (anéchō) and means to hold back or restrain. It can also refer to bearing with something patiently. Jesus seems to be grieving over the state of a world lost in sin and trapped under the curse of sin, sickness and death. He alone was able to remedy this situation.

Note here how Jesus requests that the boy be brought to him so He could see him.

Verse 42

Jesus asked the father to bring his son to Him. Note what happened as the boy approached. Luke tells us that the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him.

This was confirmation that the boy not only suffered from convulsions but those symptoms were aggravated by an unclean spirit in him. The demon responded violently in the presence of Jesus forcing the boy into convulsions. Upon seeing this, Jesus did two things.

First, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. The idea is that Jesus spoke out against this spirit and what it was doing to the boy. He did so with authority. The demon was forced to stop what it was doing, leaving the boy.

Second, Luke tells us that not only did Jesus rebuke the demon and cause it to stop convulsing the boy but He also healed him. In some cases, the exorcism of a demon resolved the problem. In this case, however, Luke tells us that the boy needed not only an exorcism but also a healing. He may have had a neurological condition that could not be healed by doctors. Jesus healed this condition, stopping any further convulsions.

It may be that the demon was using this natural weakness in the boy to invoke these seizures and self-destructive behaviours. The Lord returned the boy to his father completely healed.

Verse 43

The miracle that took place that day astonished the crowd. The word “astonished” is ἐκπλήσσω (ekpléssō)

which means to strike by force. The people were overwhelmed by what took place that day.

Note the subject of this astonishment. They were astonished at the “majesty of God.” The word majesty is μεγαλειότης (megaleiótēs) and refers to greatness and glory. The people were awestruck at the mighty power of God that could drive away a demon and bring this boy to full health again.

Luke tells us that Jesus left the people marveling at this miracle. There was no further need to speak to the crowd. The work spoke for itself. Leaving the crowd to contemplate what they had just seen, Jesus turned His focus to His disciples.

Verse 44

Turning to His disciples, the Lord Jesus revealed some astonishing news. Note how He prefaces what He was about to

say with the words, "Let these words sink into your ears."

It was important to Jesus that the disciples listen to what He was about to say. More than this, however, they were to give these words time to sink deeply into their ears and into their brain, where they could carefully reflect on them and consider their implication and impact.

What were the words Jesus wanted the disciples to hear and consider? Jesus told them that "the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

Jesus was the Son of Man. When Jesus told them that He would be delivered into "the hands of men," He was telling them that these men would take Him captive and take steps to kill Him. Our Lord knew what was ahead. News of the miracle He had performed that day by setting the boy free from a demon and healing him, would travel and stir up the jealousy of the religious leaders

who would determine even more to kill Him. It is shocking to think that an act of compassion could stir up such a response in the hearts of the religious leaders of that day.

Verse 45

The disciples heard Jesus tell them that He would be delivered into the hands of men (see verse 44). While they heard those words, they did not understand them. Luke explains this further in the second half of the verse.

First, the reason the disciples did not understand what Jesus was telling them was that it was “concealed from them so that they might not perceive it.” How were these words concealed? The Spirit of God had not yet clearly given them an understanding of the need for Christ’s death. They likely still had Jewish ideas of a Messiah setting up a physical kingdom to rule as a king

and bring prosperity to the land. The idea that their Master would die had not entered their mind. They saw death in the hands of men as defeat and had not come to see it as the perfect sacrifice required to satisfy the just demands of the Father. The concept of the resurrection and ascension of Christ had not been revealed to them in a way they could understand.

Second, not only had the Spirit of God not opened their eyes to these vital doctrines of the faith, but Luke tells us also that the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus to explain what He was telling them. It is hard to say what brought on this fear. Was it pride that refused to admit they could not understand what He was saying? Was it a fear of discovering a truth they did not want to accept –the death of a Saviour, the dashing of their expectations and the confusion that this would cause? We are simply not told.

What is clear is that they did not go to Jesus to ask for further clarification. We are left to wonder what they would have gained by swallowing their pride and confessing their ignorance.

Verse 46

In verse 45 we see how the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus to clarify His statement about being delivered over to the hands of men. We are left wondering if it was pride refusing to admit their ignorance that kept them from seeking further clarification. While it is not clearly stated in verse 45, we do see clear evidence of this pride in this verse.

Luke describes for us an argument that arose among the disciples about who was the greatest. It is unclear what brought on this argument but we have all seen arguments between people where each person was determined to

demonstrate that he or she was better than the other. The Greek word used here for argument is διαλογισμός (dialogismós) and refers to a dispute or a debate. I do not see this argument to be theological in nature but rather the result of fleshly pride that sought to lift one person over another.

We catch a glimpse here of the inner struggle that these disciples of Jesus had in those days. They were not always walking in harmony. They had their disputes and struggled with their fleshly nature even as we do today.

Verse 47

Luke tells us here that Jesus intervened in this argument among the disciples about who was greatest. Observe how Luke tells us that Jesus knew “the reasoning of their hearts.” Jesus addresses the source of this conflict.

First, it was the human heart that caused this conflict between the disciples. The heart was full of pride and sin. The disciples were being led by this sinful heart.

Second, it was the reasoning of this sinful heart that Jesus identified as the main problem. The sinful heart could not understand the things of God. Its emotions and passions were not guided by the Spirit but by fleshly needs and desires. Kingdom principles are often very different from the natural impulses of our hearts.

To help the disciples understand the mind of God in this matter, Jesus took a young child and set him down by His side. This scene set the stage for what Jesus was going to teach His disciples. On the one hand, were men who had been instructed by Jesus and had served Him faithfully. On the other hand, was a simple child, ignorant of many things but humble and searching.

The question to be answered was this:
Who is the greatest?

Verse 48

The scene has been set. Jesus' disciples stood before Him locked in a debate about who among them was the greatest. A young child innocently played at His side.

Over this scene, we hear the words of Jesus, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me." The key to understanding what Jesus is saying is found in the word "receive." The word is translated from the Greek word δέχομαι (déchomai), meaning to accept or welcome as a guest or to offer hospitality or kindness.

We are not told what ideas were being proposed by the disciples to demonstrate their greatness. It is quite possible that they discussed how they had healed the sick, cast out demons,

and preached the kingdom of God. Could it be that they measured their greatness by how many people they had healed or how many demons they cast out? It is likely that not one of the disciples, in their argument over who was greatest, thought about what Jesus told them that day: "Whoever accepts, offers kindness or hospitality to this child, does the same to me."

Jesus takes someone the disciples would not normally have even thought about, and places him before them. He tells them that if they received and offered compassion and kindness to one as young as this boy, they did the same for Him. They didn't have to be on the front lines healing the sick and preaching the kingdom of God. They could care for a little child and their act would not go unnoticed in the kingdom of heaven. What they did for that little boy they did for Christ.

Jesus takes this a step further in the words, "Whoever receives me receives him who sent me." Understand again the meaning of the word receive (to accept, to offer compassion, hospitality or kindness). Whoever opens their arms to even a little child in Christ's name ministers to Christ, and whoever ministers to the Son, in this way, ministers to the Father who sent Him.

Jesus concludes with the words, "For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." If you want to be great in the kingdom of God, be ready to minister to even the least in His kingdom. Be ready to do even the simplest of tasks for the glory of Christ. Die to the pride that seeks attention for yourself, humble yourself and care for those who are unnoticed. Be ready to do what will never be seen by others in this world. Do this for Christ and His glory alone. This is true greatness.

Verse 49

Verse 49 begins with the words, "John answered." We are left wondering what John was answering. The word used here is ἀποκρίνομαι (apokrínomai) which does not necessarily mean that John was answering a question but does imply that he was responding to something he had just heard. Luke tells us that Jesus had been speaking to the disciples about what it meant to be great in the kingdom of heaven. He told them that even those who ministered to the smallest child in his name, ministered to Him.

This talk about ministry in Jesus' name seemed to turn John's mind to a situation they had encountered. He told Jesus about an individual they met who was casting out demons in His name. The context indicates that this individual was unknown to the disciples of Christ. What is striking is that this

person, although not part of their group, used the name of Jesus to cast out demons. John tells the Lord that they tried to stop him because he was not part of their group.

The disciples believed that only they could use the name of Jesus. Jesus has given them this right in Luke 9:1. They did not see anyone else as qualified to use the name of their master.

Verse 50

Note the response of Jesus to John's statement about trying to stop an unknown individual from casting out demons in Jesus' name. Jesus told him not to stop individuals like him because the one who was not against us was for us.

I have been in churches that are so protective of their traditions and denominational beliefs that they cannot fellowship with anyone who does not

agree with them one hundred percent. These churches are more concerned about their denominational beliefs and practices than they are about the kingdom of God and its expansion in their community.

Jesus tells His disciples that the kingdom of God is very diverse. In this kingdom are men and women who don't see or do things the same way we do. The understanding we are to have, however, is this: Those who are not against us are for us. We don't all have to look the same to be on the same team. We don't all have to do things the same way to be partners. We don't all have to think the same to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Understand that there are people who are against what we stand for as believers. Some individuals deny Jesus Christ and reject His word and teaching. These individuals are not on

the same team as us. They would be classified as those who are against us and what we believe. Jesus, however, is cautioning His disciples about being so narrow that they reject legitimate brothers and sisters in the faith who, like us, seek to advance His kingdom. To stand against them is to hinder the work of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 51

In Luke 9:22, the Lord Jesus told His disciples that He was going to suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders. Luke reminds us here that the day of that betrayal and death was fast approaching. Knowing this, Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem.” The word used here is στηρίζω (stēρίζō) which carries the sense of standing fast or fixing something permanently in the mind. The idea is that Jesus Christ was firmly determined to go to Jerusalem,

where He would face suffering and death. Nothing would distract Him or keep Him from this commitment. There is here a willing and total surrender to do the will of the Father, despite the difficulties this would bring.

Verse 52

As Jesus made His way to Jerusalem, he sent messengers ahead of him into a Samaritan village. The word, “messengers” is ἀγγελος (ánggelos) and speaks of someone who was sent to make an announcement. The use of this word is important because it shows us that Jesus does not seem to be sending people ahead to find accommodations or provisions but rather to announce His coming.

Verse 53

Observe the response of the Samaritans to the announcement of the messengers sent by Jesus about His coming. Luke tells us that they did not receive Him. The reason given for their rejection of Jesus was because they knew his "face was set toward Jerusalem." There was a bitter clash between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews despised the Samaritans, and the Samaritans, in return, felt the same way toward them. Jesus' commitment to go to Jerusalem was an indication of His favour for the Jews. This was not acceptable in the Samaritan mind and so they wanted nothing to do with anyone who loved the Jews.

The fact that Jesus was willing to go to this Samaritan village, is an indication that He loved both Jews and Samaritans.

Verse 54

Note the response of James and John when they heard how the Samaritans had rejected them. They asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven to consume them. This was a serious request that revealed their deep bitterness and anger toward the Samaritans.

It may be that James and John harboured prejudice toward this race. They would have grown up with this mentality. Their desire to see the whole city destroyed, however, is a sign of their worldly mind that had not yet been transformed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We would do well to allow the Spirit of God to search our hearts and minds to find similar attitudes in us that need to be healed and transformed by the grace of God.

Verse 55

Jesus rebuked James and John for their attitude toward the Samaritans who rejected them. I am sure that their rejection of Him and His message grieved the heart of Jesus but His first response was not to call down fire from heaven to consume them. The day would come when those who rejected Him would be judged. For now, He was going to Jerusalem to die for such as these.

Understand that we will not always be accepted. The contrast between the bitterness of James and John and the love of Jesus to this rejection, however, is striking.

Verse 56

When the Samaritan village rejected them, the Lord Jesus did not push the matter. He simply moved on to another village.

We need to be sensitive to the timing and leading of the Lord in our daily lives. In this case, the Lord sent messengers to the Samaritan village to give them an opportunity to welcome Him and hear His message. They replied with a rejection. Jesus moves on to another village. He seems to be seeking the leading of the Spirit as He moves from place to place. When the Spirit closed a door, Jesus did not stay and try to force it open, He submitted to the Spirit and His leading. I have all too often tried to force open a door closed by the Spirit.

Verse 57

Often the crowds following Jesus were looking for something from Him. We have here, however, the case of an individual who was not looking for something from Jesus, but offering to follow Him wherever He went. He was

offering to be a disciple of Jesus, to learn from Him and to serve Him. Such appears to be the commitment of this individual.

Verse 58

Note the response of Jesus to the man who offered to follow Him wherever He went. Jesus showed him the cost of following Him.

Jesus begins by telling the man how foxes had holes to live in. The birds of the air built their nests to rest and raise their young. The Son of Man, however, had no such a place to lay His head. Understand that God always provided for His Son. As Jesus headed to Jerusalem, a group of women followed after Him, caring for His needs and ministering to Him.

(40) There were also women looking on from a distance, among

whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. (41) When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. – Mark 15:40-41 ESV

When Jesus was crucified, the Father assured that He had a place to rest through a man by the name of Joseph of Arimathea:

(57) When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. (58) He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. (59) And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud (60) and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great

*stone to the entrance of the tomb
and went away. – Matthew 27:57-
60 ESV*

It is as important to understand what Jesus is not saying here as it is to understand what He is. Jesus is not saying that the Father does not care for those who follow His Son. He is not teaching that those who serve God must live worse than the wild animals of the fields and forests. He is not telling us that those who follow God's Son should see themselves as inferior to the foxes of the fields or the birds of the trees. Scripture is very clear that God loves and cares for His own.

Jesus appears to be saying to this man what He said to the rich young ruler in Luke 18. When the man asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor.

(22) When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (23) But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. – Luke 18:22-23 ESV

Jesus was not saying that to inherit eternal life, you have to give all you have to the poor. He was addressing a particular matter in this rich man's life that kept him from salvation— his love for his riches. He had another God in his life.

Jesus is telling this man here in Luke 9 that our worldly possessions must be surrendered to the Lord. He must be Lord of all if we are to follow Him. Our need for security must not be tied to this world but to the Father. We must be willing to surrender all to be His

disciple. The things of this world cannot tie us down.

Verse 59

It appears that the man described in Luke 9:57 was not the only one wanting to follow Jesus wherever He went. Luke tells us that Jesus addressed a second individual who also wanted to follow Him but wanted first to bury his father.

Note that Luke does not tell us that this man's father had died. While this is possible, it is equally as possible that His father was aging and he needed to care for him until he died. When his father died, and his obligations to him were completed, he would then have time to commit himself to following Jesus.

Verse 60

To the man who wanted to bury his father before following Jesus, the Lord Jesus says: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Again, it is as important that we understand what Jesus is not saying as it is to understand what He is. Jesus is not telling us that we should ignore family and our obligations toward our family. Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul would say:

(8) But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. – 1 Timothy 5:8 ESV

Writing about the qualifications of an overseer in the church, the apostle told Timothy:

*(4) He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
(5) for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?
– 1 Timothy 3:4-5 ESV*

Speaking directly about widows, the apostle Paul commands Timothy:

(4) But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. – 1 Timothy 5:4 ESV

We see from these verses that the believer, and especially the servant of God, must care for his or her family.

Having said this, we read the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:37:

*(37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. – Matthew 10:37
ESV*

While the believer in Jesus must care for family, that family must not take the place of God in their lives. Have you ever met a person who rejected Christ for fear of what their family would say? Have you ever met a mother or father whose children mean more to them than God? Jesus and our commitment to Him must become our priority. There are times when we must walk away from family to follow Jesus. When my wife and I felt the call of God to leave our country and go overseas as foreign missionaries, we had to be willing to leave our family. There are times when new believers will have to walk away from their unbelieving families to follow the Lord Jesus.

Note here the phrase, "Let the dead bury their dead." There is a physical death, and there is a spiritual death. Jesus seems to be referring to both here. The picture before us is of a man, from an unbelieving family, who hears Jesus speak and sees the demonstration of the kingdom of God through the healings that took place in those days. He is convinced that this Jesus must be the Son of God and wants to follow Him. To do this, however, he must leave his unbelieving family to care for His father until he dies.

Jesus seems to be telling this man that his spiritually dead family should take on the responsibility of burying his physically dead father when he passed away. If God was calling Him to follow Jesus, he should not let his family hinder this.

Generally, as believers, we are to do all we can to care for our families. There

are times, however, when those families want to keep us from Jesus and our walk with Him. Jesus, and His purpose must be first in our lives if we want to be His true disciples.

Verse 61

Luke recounts how a third individual tells Jesus that he wanted to follow him but first wanted to go and bid farewell to the people in his home. Consider this for a moment.

The man Luke speaks about hears the words of Jesus and sees the demonstration of His power, and is convinced that He is the Christ. In his heart, he feels the call of God to leave everything and follow Jesus. Note how He responds. He says, "Jesus, I want to follow you, but let me first go and say good-bye to my family." The man leaves the presence of Jesus and goes home. He spends the next week or so visiting

the various members of his family, saying goodbye. A week goes by, and the man is still getting things ready for his departure. A month goes by, and he's not really sure where Jesus is. A year goes by, and the call and the passion to follow have faded somewhat. Two years go by and he has become involved in matters that seem to be taking his full attention. What was once a burning passion is now a fading memory. It all began by leaving Jesus' side to say good-bye to family and friends.

Verse 62

Note Jesus' response to the man who wanted to say goodbye to the people in his home.

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Remember Lot's wife! Two angels came to tell him that the judgment of God was about to fall on his city. They told him to take his family and flee the city, not looking back. Lot obeyed, gathered his family and fled. His wife, however, direct disobedience to the command of God through the angels, looked back at the city, and Genesis 19:26 tells us:

(26) But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. – Genesis 19:26 ESV

Why do we look back? We do so not just out of curiosity but because what is behind still has some attraction to us. Have you ever heard a person say, "I left and never looked back." What they mean by this is that they not only physically left a place or circumstance, but they emotionally left it as well. They had no more desire to return in their heart.

The kind of looking back Jesus speaks about here is what happened when Israel, wandering in the wilderness, began to long to be back in Egypt, the land of her bondage. It is the kind of look that takes a husband from his wife. It is to entertain sin and its pleasures when we have committed ourselves to following the Lord Jesus. It is the kind of looking back that the man in Luke 9:61 did when he said to Jesus, "I want to follow you, but I need to go back and say good-bye to my family."

When Jesus calls, set your hands to the plough. Focus your eyes on Him and walk forward, without looking back.

LUKE 10

Verse 1

Jesus began His ministry with twelve disciples. Note what is happening here now. He appointed seventy-two disciples and sent them on ahead of Him to the places he planned to visit. While there has been significant opposition to Jesus, the number of followers and genuine disciples has been growing. Jesus has been training those who followed Him in ministry and now sends them out in teams of two to put into practice what He has been teaching them. Observe that these seventy-two went to the towns where Jesus planned to visit. These individuals

did not go wherever they wanted to go. They went where the Lord Jesus wanted them and where He was going to show up.

Verse 2

Jesus has some words of counsel and advice to the seventy-two disciples preparing to go on ahead of Him to the various towns He planned to visit. Note first that He challenged them to pray for more kingdom workers. While you would think that seventy-two disciples was a significant number of workers, Jesus reminds them that the harvest of souls was so large that they needed to plead with the Father for more. These seventy-two were insufficient for the task ahead. While Jesus was soon going to be killed, the harvest would continue. In fact, His death would usher in a harvest of souls that none of these seventy-two disciples could ever

imagine. This challenge to these disciples is significant and gave them a ministry focus. They were looking for men and women who would devote themselves to being kingdom workers, sharing and demonstrating the presence of the kingdom of God. They were to find souls who would stand with them in declaring the kingdom of God. God is looking for men and women who will, out of gratitude for what He has done, devote themselves to declaring Him through word and deed. Observe how Jesus tells the seventy-two that the harvest was plentiful. These individuals did not go out to plant the seed but to harvest what had already been planted. The Spirit of God would go before them, preparing the souls of men and women to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Note also that the one who sends these labourers into the harvest is the Lord of the harvest. These individuals would know the burden of

the Lord on their hearts and respond to the call of God to go. The seventy-two who left that day were appointed by Jesus to go. They were only to go to the cities He was going to visit. They were to harvest what the Spirit of God had already ripened and prepared. They were to ask God to raise up and send workers of His choice into the harvest. There is something very powerful in this verse. Who is doing the sending, preparing the harvest and deciding where these seventy-two disciples go? Isn't all this the work of God? What was the role of the seventy-two? They were to pray for God to do the work. They were to depend on Him, trust His leading and walk in obedience. Jesus was looking for disciples who would be more willing to follow His leading than in doing things their own way. He was seeking men and women of prayer who recognized that the work to which they were called was not dependent so much on human effort as

it was on the powerful work of God's Spirit.

Verse 3

The second piece of advice Jesus gives the seventy-two is that He was sending them out as lambs among wolves. There would be resistance to their ministry. Jesus had just declared to the twelve disciples that He would be delivered over to the hands of men (see Luke 9:44). His disciples needed to be ready for the same opposition. It is true that they were sent by Jesus and that the Spirit of God would be preparing the harvest, but their presence would awaken the enemy. As they prayed and committed the circumstances they encountered to God, they riled up their foes. These foes would not be pleased and rise up to resist. The lives of these seventy-two

disciples would be in danger. They needed to be ready.

Verse 4

The next instruction Jesus gave the seventy-two disciples was that they were to carry no moneybag, no knapsack and no sandals. Travelling teachers depended on the financial gifts of people in the various communities they visited. These gifts would be graciously received and put in a money bag for future needs. With no money bag, these seventy-two had no place to store money. In other words, Jesus is challenging them to trust God rather than people. Like the moneybag, the knapsack carried supplies of food and provisions for the journey. Instead of trusting their accumulated store of food and provisions, these seventy-two disciples were to trust God to provide in their time of need. Notice also that

Jesus did not want the seventy-two to carry sandals for the journey. This does not necessarily mean that they were to go barefoot. It does mean that they were to have no spare sandals. They had no place to store these sandals anyway, and were not to be weighted down with any hindrance to their journey. They were to trust in the provision of God and rely on Him to provide for this basic need. What is clear is that they were not to be focused on their needs, making money or being weighed down with a desire to profit personally from their ministry in Jesus' name. Observe here that the seventy-two disciples were not to greet anyone on the road. These men were to travel directly to the towns and villages Jesus was going to visit. They were not to be distracted by people on the way. As his representatives, they were to devote themselves to the task at hand with all urgency. One of the tactics of the enemy is to distract God's

people from the work they are called to do. In this case, he does so by putting people on their path to keep them from doing what God had called them to do. Understand here that this distraction is not just from people but also from the money and possessions they might accumulate along the way. Jesus is looking for those who will commit themselves to His purpose without the distractions of people and possessions to hinder them.

Verse 5

The next counsel the Lord gives the seventy-two disciples relates to their accommodations in the various communities where they would minister. Observe the phrase, “whatever house you enter.” As these disciples moved from town to town, preaching and demonstrating the kingdom of God, they would be

accommodated by people in that community. While they were to carry nothing with them on the journey, the Lord would provide for them through the generosity of individuals in these various towns and villages. The disciples were to receive this hospitality as from the Lord. Note secondly here that when they were offered hospitality, they were to bless the home with the words, "Peace be to this house." Understand here that the Lord Jesus commanded them to speak this blessing over the homes where they stayed. The disciples had no money to offer the individuals in the home, but they did have the blessing of the Lord. These were not idle words but the genuine favour of the Lord Jesus upon the homes of those who ministered to His servants. Speaking in Matthew 10:42, the Lord Jesus said:

(42) And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold

water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” – Matthew 10:42 ESV

God heard the blessing of His disciples, commanded by His Son and would respond in favour toward those households who ministered to His servants.

Verse 6

While the disciples were to bless each home that offered them hospitality, that blessing was not always guaranteed to every family. Observe what Jesus tells the disciples here. If a son of peace were in that home, the peace they blessed the home with would remain there. If, however, this was not the case, then that blessing would be returned to the disciples and not remain in the home. Understand that

not everyone who invited the disciples into their home was open to their message. Some individuals, upon hearing the disciples, may have rejected what they preached. Some may have even become bitter and angry with them and what they represented. The word translated as peace is the Greek word εἰρήνη (eirēnē), which speaks of harmony and tranquility and is the opposite of warfare and contention. Imagine that the disciples were invited into the home of an individual who rejected their message and bitterly accused them of blasphemy and heresy. Their time in that home was a constant clash with the homeowner, who, like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, rejected His message and wanted to kill Him. This was not a man of peace, and the blessing of God would not be upon the home that treated the servants of God in this way.

Verse 7

Jesus tells the seventy-two that they were to remain in the same house when they were in a community, being content with what they were provided to eat and drink. They were not to go from house to house. Let's consider this for a moment. First, note the phrase, "eating and drinking what they provide." It is uncertain what the family would provide the disciples to eat and drink. If they were a wealthy family, they may have eaten very well. If they were poorer, their food may have been very simple. The disciples were to be content with what the Lord provided for them. Imagine that the disciples arrived in a home where the food was scarce and the accommodations were uncomfortable. The temptation would be for them to look for better accommodations. Jesus tells them not to do this. They were to remain with the family that offered them hospitality

and receive what they provided with gratitude and contentment. They were not to have an attitude that constantly sought to better their condition. This was not to be their focus in ministry. We have all met servants of God who seem always to be looking out for themselves and their ease. Jesus cautions these seventy-two about this. At the same time, imagine these disciples feeling guilty because they were being cared for by others. Deep in their heart, they struggle with not being able to have money to care for their own needs. They don't like taking food from others. They don't like having to depend on others to provide a place for them to sleep. To these disciples, the Lord says, "the labourer deserves his wages." God had called these men to minister in His name. He was paying them their wages by moving people to provide for them so they could be faithful to the task at hand.

Verse 8

Jesus tells His disciples that whenever they entered a town, they were to receive and eat what was set before them. There are three points I would like to make here.

First, the disciple was to have an attitude of gratitude. They were to be thankful for what the people in the community provided. They were not to complain but receive what was provided with a thankful heart.

Second, the disciple was to be content. The food may not have been their favourite. They may not have received as much as they wanted, but they were to be content with the provisions they were given.

Third, the disciple was to accept what was provided as from the Lord. People provided for these disciples, but ultimately it was the Lord who opened their hearts to do so. To grumble or

complain about the provisions of that town was to speak against God who provided through them.

God's servants were to receive and eat what was set before them with gratitude and contentment, recognizing that this was the provision (whether big or small) of a sovereign God through the people in that community.

Verse 9

Having counselled the disciples about how their needs would be provided for in verses 5-8, Jesus moves on to tell them what they were to do in these communities where they stayed. Their ministry was twofold.

First, Jesus commissions the seventy-two disciples to heal the sick. The curse of sin has had devastating consequences on the human race. Sin's curse has brought sickness and death to each one of us. This is the case

physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. We are surrounded by people who are physically sick and dying. We all know people who are emotionally wounded and suffering. Broken relationships in family, church and society are common. Spiritually, people are suffering in their relationship with God. Some do not even know the Saviour and are destined for an eternity of separation from Him. The gospel speaks to each of these issues. The power of the gospel brings healing to physical, emotional, societal, and spiritual brokenness. The church is called to demonstrate this power by healing these wounded in Christ's name.

Second, the disciples were not only called to heal the sick but also to declare that the kingdom of God had come. They were to declare Jesus as Lord of that kingdom and call upon the people of the towns and villages of

Israel to bow their knee to Him as their Lord and King.

Verse 10

In Luke 10:1, we read how Jesus appointed the seventy-two disciples and sent them ahead of Him into the towns and places “where He himself was about to go.” Note here, however, that there appears to be towns in this list that would not receive the disciples. This is evident in the phrase, “whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you.” Side by side, these verses are quite striking. Jesus wanted to go into certain towns, but they would not receive those He sent to prepare the way. The offer of salvation and hope is presented even to those who would reject it. They are without excuse. Jesus would go on here to tell the disciples what they were to do when they were rejected by the town.

He tells them to go out into the street where the people were with a very particular message from Him. Verse 11 tells us what that message was to be.

Verse 11

The message Jesus gave the disciples to share with those towns and places that rejected Him is in this verse. Note two details here.

First, the disciples were to tell the people of the town that rejected His Word, that they would wipe off even the dust of their town that clung to their feet against them. The idea is that they rejected them so completely that they would not even take the dust of the town on their feet to any other place lest they defile it.

Second, the disciples were to tell the people of that town that despite their rejection, the kingdom of God was near. Their rejection of Christ's message

would not hinder the work of the kingdom. In fact, they would have to answer for their rejection.

Verse 12

Jesus went on to tell the seventy-two that it would be more bearable on the day of judgment for Sodom than for the town that rejected the message of the kingdom they brought to them.

Sodom was the city the Lord destroyed in Genesis 18. It was the town where Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family lived. God destroyed it for its great evil.

The question we must ask ourselves here is this: Why would it be more bearable for evil Sodom than the towns that rejected the message the seventy-two brought? The answer to this is found in verse 13.

Verse 13

Jesus lists two cities here. In the context, He has just told the seventy-two disciples that there would be towns that would reject the message of the kingdom. Is it possible that these were two of those towns?

Jesus told the disciples in verse 12 that it would be more bearable for Sodom than for the towns that rejected their kingdom message. Speaking of Chorazin and Bethsaida as towns that rejected this message of the kingdom, Jesus tells His disciples that if Tyre and Sidon had seen His "mighty works," they would have repented, dressed in sackcloth and sat in ashes.

Tyre and Sidon were very prosperous cities in their day. Their prosperity, however, caused them to turn their back on the Lord God. Isaiah proclaims the judgment of God upon them for their evil in Isaiah 23.

Jesus tells His disciples that if these cities, however, had seen what Chorazin

and Bethsaida had seen, they would have repented and turned from their sin. Chorazin and Bethsaida knew of the Lord Jesus and had seen the mighty things He did. Although the Son of God was among them, these towns still rejected the Lord. They had greater opportunity than Tyre and Sidon, but still turned their back on the Messiah and His demonstrations of power.

Sackcloth was a coarse material worn by mourners. It may have been made of goat hair and possibly quite uncomfortable. It was worn as a sort of penance.

Ashes were also used by mourners. After being raped by Ammon, Tamar put ashes on her head and cried:

(19) And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying

*aloud as she went. – 2 Samuel
13:19 ESV*

When Mordecai heard of Haman's plot to slaughter the Jews, Esther 4:1 tells us that he put on sackcloth and ashes and went about the city with a loud and bitter cry:

*(1) When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. – Esther 4:1
ESV*

After losing all his wealth and his family, Job sat in ashes, grieving:

*(8) And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. –
Job 2:8 ESV*

This would have been the response of Tyre and Sidon had they met the Messiah and seen His miraculous deeds. This did not mean they were guiltless. Tyre and Sidon became very proud. Their king saw himself as a god (see Ezekiel 28:2, 6, 9), rejecting the one true God of Israel. They did not have the Messiah living and walking among them, performing mighty works that proved He was from God. Their rejection of Israel's God was inexcusable but more understandable than the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida, which heard Jesus speak and saw His miraculous deeds. These two cities would have more to answer for than Tyre and Sidon.

There appear to be levels of judgment and accountability here in this verse. Tyre's punishment would be more bearable than Chorazin's. Sidon's chastisement would be less severe than Bethsaida's.

Verse 14

Jesus repeats His thoughts from verse 12 here by telling Chorazin and Bethsaida that it would be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon than it would be for them because they had seen the mighty works of God and rejected the Messiah. The word translated "bearable" here is ἀνεκτότερος (anektóteros). It is derived from "anektós," meaning tolerable, and the word "anéchō," meaning to bear. The idea seems to be that Tyre and Sidon's punishment would be more tolerable to bear than that of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Both Tyre and Sidon and Chorazin and Bethsaida would be punished for their rejection of Israel's God and His purpose, but Chorazin and Bethsaida's punishment would be much harsher, for they had greater opportunity to repent.

Verse 15

Jesus adds a third town to the list of towns rejecting Him. He tells Capernaum that they would not be exalted to heaven but rather brought down to Hades. The word “Hades” (ᾍδης, hádēs) in Greek culture represented the place of the dead. In the New Testament, the word can refer to hell, but it is also used to speak of death or the place where the dead remain awaiting judgement. In the case of Capernaum, she would be destroyed and brought down to her grave.

Verse 16

Concluding His words to the seventy-two, Jesus tells them that whoever heard them, heard Him, and whoever rejected them, rejected Him. They were His representatives, and carried with them a message and the authority to

speak in His name. By rejecting the divine message they brought, people rejected Jesus. We carry that same authority, as we preach the message of the gospel.

Verse 17

Luke does not recount what took place as the seventy-two disciples went out in Jesus' name. He does tell us, however, their response when they returned.

Note how the disciples were joyful when they returned. The word χαρά (chará) here speaks of rejoicing and gladness. These men rejoiced at the power of God that was demonstrated through them.

Of particular note is their joy in the fact that the demons of hell were subject to them in His name. As his representatives, they had been given power over these demonic forces and the devastation they were causing in

the lives of individuals they encountered.

Observe that the power was not in them, but in the name of the Lord Jesus, who gave them authority. While they were ordinary people, they carried the badge of Jesus' authority wherever they went, and even demons had to respect that badge.

Verse 18

The news that demons submitted to the name of Jesus was not news to Jesus. Note how He relates to the disciples, how He had witnessed Satan falling from heaven like lightning. In an instant, Satan's rebellion drove him and his angels from the presence of God. They could not stand before a holy and almighty God. These seventy-two disciples testified to the power and authority of God over demonic forces of evil and particularly to the power of the

name of Jesus, who broke their authority and hold at the cross.

Verse 19

The seventy-two disciples returned from their mission trip excited to see how they had power over demonic forces of evil. Jesus tells them He had also given them authority over three other things.

First, Jesus gave them authority to tread on serpents. The snake in Scripture is often portrayed as an enemy. Satan disguised himself as a serpent when he tempted Eve in the Garden. In Numbers 21:6, we read how God sent “fiery serpents” to bite His people as punishment for their sin. To tread on a serpent is to crush, hurt or even kill it. Jesus gives His disciples authority over things that could hurt them as they stepped out in ministry for the kingdom.

Second, Jesus gives His disciples authority to tread on scorpions. The fact of the matter is this. Anyone can step on a scorpion, often with painful results. The question, however, is this: What does it mean to have authority to tread on a scorpion? The word authority here is ἐξουσία (exousía) and speaks of permission, or right. It also speaks of an ability or power over something or someone. In the name of Jesus, the disciples had authority over those things that would come against them to hurt them or hinder their kingdom ministry.

Third, note that the disciples were also given authority over the power of the enemy. Jesus does not tell us what that enemy might be. It was not just serpents and scorpions but also anything that would “hurt” his disciples. Jesus makes a bold statement here in this verse, stating that with this authority, “nothing” would hurt His

disciples. The word hurt is ἀδικέω (adikéō) and speaks of doing wrong to or damaging something unjustly.

The words of Jesus in this verse are very confusing. Have you ever met a Christian who was bitten by a snake, stung by a scorpion or hurt by an enemy? Have you ever met a believer who was mistreated in some way? If we are honest with ourselves, every one of us has experienced hurt in this life or been treated wrongly, not only by enemies but by friends as well. Consider the life of the Lord Jesus, who had perfect power and authority. Though He did no wrong, He was unjustly treated by His own people, as well as the Roman authorities. He was not only hurt but horribly crucified by those He created.

If we are to understand the words of Jesus here, we need to understand not only what He said but also His life and example. We need to ask two

questions. First, was Jesus hurt by His enemies and friends? Second, did Jesus have authority over His enemies? Both questions must be answered with a resounding, "yes." The prophet Isaiah, speaking prophetically about the coming Messiah, says:

(3) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. – Isaiah 53:3-5 ESV

The man who told His disciples
"nothing shall hurt you," was Himself a
"man of sorrow, and acquainted with
grief." He was "stricken, smitten by God
and afflicted. He was "pierced,"
"crushed," and chastised for us. Writing
about the great heroes of the faith, the
writer to the Hebrews has this to say:

*(32) And what more shall I say? For
time would fail me to tell of Gideon,
Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David
and Samuel and the prophets—
(33) who through faith conquered
kingdoms, enforced justice,
obtained promises, stopped the
mouths of lions, (34) quenched the
power of fire, escaped the edge of
the sword, were made strong out of
weakness, became mighty in war,
put foreign armies to flight. (35)
Women received back their dead by
resurrection. Some were tortured,
refusing to accept release, so that
they might rise again to a better*

*life. (36) Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— (38) of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
– Hebrews 11:32-38 ESV*

These men and women of faith were persecuted, tortured, flogged, imprisoned, killed with the sword, and sawn in two. They lived afflicted and destitute lives because of their faith in Jesus Christ. How do we reconcile what Jesus is saying here to the seventy-two with the example of His life and that of those who followed him in the years after his resurrection?

The answer seems to lie in the words of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 10:28:

(28) And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. – Matthew 10:28 ESV

As human beings, we focus on the physical body. We identify each other by the appearance of these bodies. So much of this life is caught up in keeping that body alive and healthy. We feed it, care for it and give it the rest it needs. We spend so much time, energy and resources on it that we have come to believe that this physical body is who we are.

The fact of the matter is that we are much more than our physical body. In fact, we do not even need this body to live. Like God, we are spiritual creatures. When this body dies, our

soul lives on. Our body is merely a temporary home for our spirit. Will serpents bite our physical body? They surely will. Will scorpions sting this earthly dwelling? They will. Will enemies beat this temporary dwelling place, break its bones and kill it? They may very well do so. Will these things destroy our soul? Will they keep us from living on into eternity? They most certainly cannot. Nothing can separate us from the promise of Jesus and the life He offers. They may take our home, but they will not take our soul. They may destroy our body, but our soul is beyond their ability. They have no power over it. I would dare to say that what hurts our physical body may even strengthen our soul and our relationship with God to the absolute frustration of our enemy.

Verse 20

The seventy-two disciples returned from their mission trip joyful and rejoicing in the fact that demonic spirits were subject to them. As important as this was, there was something even more wonderful than this — their names were written in heaven.

The imagery of a name being written in heaven refers to our citizenship. The Lord is pictured here writing the names of his children in a great registry. All whose names are written in this registry belong to Him and have the rights of a citizen.

As important as our service on this earth may be, understand that nothing can compare to the knowledge that I belong to Jesus Christ, have been cleansed and forgiven by His work on the cross and will dwell with Him for all eternity. The greatest delights this earth can provide fade into insignificance compared to the joys of heaven.

What Jesus says here is a command. He tells His disciples not to be so focused on their earthly blessings that they fail to see the One who saved them and keeps them for eternity, and the privilege they have in Him to be known as His children.

Verse 21

We have seen the response of the seventy-two disciples who went out in Jesus name. Luke 10:17 tells us:

(17) The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" – Luke 10:17 ESV

These individuals were filled with joy at the power of God that was manifested in them. Here in verse 21 we see the response of Jesus to the return of the

seventy-two disciples from their mission trip.

Luke begins the verse with the phrase, "in that same hour." This connects it with the context of the return of the seventy-two disciples. Jesus appears to be responding to the joy they felt at the discovery of God's authority in their lives.

Jesus' response here is one of rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. The sense is that He is in tune with the Spirit of God in this rejoicing. The assumption of course is that the Spirit of God also is rejoicing in the same things as Jesus.

Observe the subject of Jesus' rejoicing in His prayer. Jesus thanks the father that He has hidden "these things" from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. To understand the meaning of the phrase, "these things," we need to look at the context. The seventy-two disciples had just experienced the power and

authority of the Spirit of God to overcome the power of the devil. It appears that this is the subject of great joy to the Lord Jesus.

This power and authority was hidden from the wise and understanding. These individuals trusted their own wisdom and ability. They made their plans, developed their programmes and precisely executed their agendas in human strength and wisdom. They saw no need to trust in the Lord. They believed that those who sought the Lord in everything were superstitious, weak and immature. As educated and skilled people they were fully able to carry out their own plans and achieve success. The authority and power of God was not revealed to these individuals because their minds were closed and they could not see anything beyond themselves.

On the other hand, those the wise and educated saw as immature children saw

something these learned people failed to see. They saw that what could never be done through education and experience was being done in the power of God working through them. Jesus rejoiced to see these seventy-two "children" understand and experience the power of God to overcome the forces of hell. Luke concludes with the words of Jesus, "for such was your gracious will." What is Jesus saying here? He is telling us that it was the will of the Father to use those who understood that their education and experience, as important as they are, is not what would advance the kingdom of God. The spiritual battle in which we are engaged is not won by human reason. Satan is not threatened by your university degrees. He does not fear your years of experience in ministry. He has taken down many with years of ministry under their belt. What does threaten our enemy, however, is the power and authority of Christ

demonstrated in the simplest believer. Jesus rejoiced that these seventy-two disciples had learned this vital lesson. As the prophet Zechariah said:

(6) Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. – Zechariah 4:6 ESV

Verse 22

The power and authority the seventy-two experienced on their mission trip, as exciting as it was, was not an end in itself. Observe that Jesus did not just rejoice that the seventy-two had discovered authority over demonic forces, but also that they had discovered something of infinitely greater value than this. What had they discovered?

First, Jesus tells us that all things had been handed over to Him by the Father.

Listen to the words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:

(21) Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. – 1 Peter 3:21-22 ESV

Peter tells us that angels, authorities and powers have all been subjected to the Lord Jesus. He is Lord over all. There is no greater authority. Writing about his vision of the heavenly kingdom, the apostle John said:

(5) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light,

and they will reign forever and ever.- Revelation 22:5 ESV

The reign of Jesus is forever throughout all eternity. No power, authority or kingdom will oppose this reign. He has been handed all things by the Father and is Lord over all.

Second, Jesus tells us here that no one would know the Father or the Son except those to whom He reveals them. What would it be like to not know the Father and the Son? Jesus is the only Saviour sent by the Father to restore humankind to Himself. John 3:17 has this to say about knowing and believing in the Son:

(18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. – John 3:18 ESV

Not knowing the Son is not just a matter of ignorance, but the difference between eternal life and eternal condemnation. If knowing the Son is so important, how do we know Him? Jesus gives us the answer here in the words "the Son chooses to reveal him." You can search your whole life and never find the Lord Jesus. Understand here that while we may seek Him, He must choose to reveal Himself to us if we are to know Him. This is what He is doing all across this world. He is revealing Himself to people of every generation and race. What is important for us to see here is that the truth that was more wonderful than the fact that demons flee in the name of Jesus is that Jesus has revealed Himself to us. That reality changes our lives. It gives us eternal life, forgiveness and power in His name to live and serve in this world. Jesus rejoiced that these seventy-two disciples had come to know Him and

the power of His forgiveness and life in them.

Verse 23

Having stated that he revealed Himself to those He chose, Jesus now turns to His disciples and reminds them how blessed they were to see what they saw.

These disciples walked physically with Jesus on this earth. They heard Him teach and experienced His miracles. They saw the Son of God face to face and knew Him personally. We have not had this privilege as people who live many years after Jesus' death and resurrection. We see Him with spiritual eyes and hear Him with spiritual ears, but we have not seen him face to face like those disciples did.

Verse 24

Jesus reminded the disciples of the privilege they had to see Him face to face. Prophets and kings of old spoke of the coming Messiah. Some of them longed to see Him on this earth but died without ever having that experience. They could only imagine what it would have been like to walk with the Messiah, hear Him teach and experience His life.

It is all too easy to take what we have for granted. How many times have we lost the sense of wonder at knowing the Saviour and having the assurance of our salvation? How many times have we become complacent in our spiritual walk or let our love and devotion to Him falter? All around this world are men and women who long to know this Saviour and experience what we do, but have never yet had this encounter. Don't ever lose the sense of wonder and awe of Jesus and the revelation of Himself to you.

Verse 25

A lawyer approached Jesus on one occasion and asked Him an important question. Note here, however, that there was an ulterior motivation behind this question. Luke tells us that the intention of the lawyer was to put Jesus to the test. Understand here that the laws of many countries are quite separate from the faith of their citizens. This was not the case in Israel. The law of the land was the Law of Moses, given to them by God and handed down in the sacred writings. This lawyer was a student of the Scriptures. He studied these Old Testament writings and applied their laws and regulations to the lives of God's people. He likely had His understanding of salvation and eternal life through the careful observation of the Law of Moses. Clearly, his intention here was to trap Jesus into saying something that he could use to condemn Him

using his skills and knowledge of the law. The question this lawyer asked is this: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Verse 26

Jesus turns the question back to the lawyer as an expert in the Law of Moses. He refers him to the Scriptures and asks him what they said about obtaining eternal life. Note the question, "How do you read it?" The question Jesus asks here is how do you interpret the law as it pertains to inheriting eternal life. Jesus meets the lawyer on common ground, the Word of God.

Verse 27

The lawyer who had come to test Jesus responds to his own question about what the law taught about inheriting

eternal life. As he studied the law of Moses, he had come to the conclusion that to inherit eternal life one had to love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind and their neighbour as themselves. The answer this lawyer gave comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18, which read:

(4) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. – Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ESV

(18) You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD. – Leviticus 19:18 ESV

Clearly, the lawyer had reflected on this question and was depending on his ability to keep those commandments to inherit eternal life.

Verse 28

Jesus' response to the lawyer is surprising. He told him that he had correctly interpreted the law of Moses and that if he obeyed these regulations, he would live. We need to examine Jesus' response more closely.

Jesus told the lawyer he could have eternal life if he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and his neighbour as he loved himself. The problem with what Jesus is saying is this: Not one of us can perfectly love God or our neighbours in this way. We disobey God in mind, action and word every day. There are many times in the course of a day, in big and small ways, that we

demonstrate that we love ourselves more than God. Who among us has always loved their neighbour as they love themselves? Consider this over the course of your lifetime. Have you always kept these two great commandments of God perfectly? Only a fool would say that they have done so. Every one of us has failed God and our fellow human beings. We have sinned against God and our neighbour and are guilty before him. Jesus, using the lawyer's own words, places him in an impossible situation. He could not keep these commandments perfectly, and as a result, his eternal life could not be guaranteed.

Verse 29

What is the natural response of a proud heart when convicted by Scripture? Note what the lawyer does. Determined

to justify himself, he asks: "Who is my neighbour?"

He knew the Scriptures challenged him to love his neighbour as himself. He knew that if he interpreted this law literally, he would be guilty, so he determined to redefine the word neighbour.

I have listened to the arguments of pro abortionists. One of the common themes I notice is how they redefine or choose not to use certain words. They call the baby in the womb an "embryo," or a "clump of cells." If they admitted that what was in the womb was a human being or a baby, they would have a hard time explaining how they were justified in killing it. If, on the other hand, they dehumanize the child by calling it an embryo or a clump of cells, they can justify its removal. It would be similar to removing a cancerous growth. This seems to be the way this lawyer is thinking here.

If my neighbour is only my closest friend, I might be able to say that I love him or her as I love myself. If, on the other hand, we expand that definition to include other people, the chances I fall short rapidly increase. The word neighbour here is πλησίον (plēsión) and refers to someone who is near. The word, however, refers not just to geographical proximity but to those who share something in common. You might, for example, share a neighbourhood, a country or the fact that you are all believers or citizens of the human race. The word is unspecific.

The lawyer is trying to define the word neighbour in such a narrow sense that he has a better chance of obeying the law of Moses. It is one thing to say that my neighbours are those who share all my values and with whom I get along. It is another to say that my neighbour is every member of the human race.

Verse 30

Jesus uses an illustration to define the word “neighbour” to the lawyer who was seeking to inherit eternal life by means of his love for God and his neighbour. He tells a story about a man who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho. The distance was about 27 kilometers or 17 miles. While it is uncertain why Jesus chooses to speak of this particular road, it appears to have been well-travelled and may have had a reputation of being somewhat dangerous for travelers due to potential thieves seeking to take advantage of the crowds. In the case of Jesus’ story, the man who was travelling this important route was robbed, beaten and left half dead on the road.

Verse 31

Among those also travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho was a priest. Seeing this man, lying on the road, beaten and half dead, the priest crossed to the other side and continued his journey. We are not told why he refused to help this traveler. It may be that he did not want to make himself unclean. It may also have been because he did not see this as his responsibility. He was a special servant of God, tasked with offering sacrifices and performing religious rituals. He may have seen it as being beneath his dignity to get involved in helping this man on the road.

Verse 32

After the priest came a Levite. The Levite was a servant in the temple. They did not have the rights of the priests but served their needs. They were used to blood and guts as they

often prepared animals for sacrifice. Note, however, that they also were too “high and mighty” to stoop down to care for this traveler lying half dead on the road. Like the priests, they too crossed the road and passed by.

Verse 33

A third individual was travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho that day. He was a Samaritan. This was a race despised by the Jews. Jesus likely uses this Samaritan to emphasize His point about what it means to be a neighbour. Note the response of the Samaritan to the man lying half dead on the road. Unlike the priest and Levite who crossed to the other side and passed by, this Samaritan “came to where he was” and had compassion on him. The word σπλαγχνίζομαι (splagchnízomai), translated here as compassion, refers to a deep feeling or

pity. We have seen that the lawyer is seeking to “justify himself” (verse 29) before Jesus by asking the question, “Who is my neighbour?” The word “neighbour” (πλησίον, plēsíon) refers to someone who is near or who shares something in common. The lawyer was likely trying to narrow down the scope of the word to justify his lack of love. By using a Samaritan in this illustration, Jesus presented the lawyer with a person he felt he had nothing in common with at all.

Verse 34

Note the response of the Samaritan in Jesus’ illustration.

First, he demonstrates compassion to the man lying half dead on the road by binding his wounds. The idea here is that he stopped the bleeding, cleaned the wounds and protected them so they could heal.

Second, he poured oil and wine on the wounds. Both oil and wine had antiseptic properties and would have been important in the cleansing of the wounds and killing any germs that may have entered them.

Third, the Samaritan put the man on his own animal and brought him to an inn. The inn was a place where the wounded could be comfortable and rest. The priest and Levite left him on the road. The Samaritan assures he has a comfortable and clean place to rest while healing.

Fourth, Jesus told the lawyer that the Samaritan “took care of him” at the inn. The idea seems to be that the Samaritan put aside his plans for Jericho and stayed with the man until he was sure that he was well enough to be alone.

Verse 35

It appears that the Samaritan in Jesus' illustration stayed the night with the wounded man. When morning came, he took out two denarii (two day's wages), gave them to the innkeeper and asked him to take care of the wounded traveler. Observe that he was willing to pay even more to the innkeeper if he took longer to heal. This Samaritan took on the financial obligations for his new friend who had been robbed and was now without money.

Verse 36

The lawyer asked Jesus the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus responded with a story about a man robbed and left for dead on the road and the response of a Jewish priest, a Levite and a Samaritan to meeting this man. Having completed his story, Jesus now asked the question, "Which of

these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" The question Jesus asks here is important. Note how He asks the lawyer about which of these three individuals was a neighbour to the man who "fell among the robbers." This moves the question from an intellectual debate about the meaning of the word "neighbour" to a very practical one. Jesus changes the question from, "Who is my neighbour?" to, "How can I be a neighbour?"

Verse 37

The lawyer, understanding Jesus' question, responded by telling him that the "one who showed mercy" acted as a neighbour. Observe that he does not dare to use the word "Samaritan" in his response. It is quite likely that it grieved him to admit that the

Samaritan was a greater neighbour than the Jewish priest and Levite.

The point Jesus is making is that loving one's neighbour is not so much about a specific person as it is an act of compassion and mercy toward anyone we meet. My neighbour is the person God puts before me at any given time and place. It is the person I do not know but interact with on my daily routine. It is about living a life of compassion, love, generosity and devotion toward anyone God puts on my path, whether that person is a friend or foe.

Jesus challenged the lawyer to have this attitude and to follow the example of the Samaritan in the story. He was to minister to those in need and be a true neighbour to those he encountered wherever life took him.

Verse 38

Leaving the lawyer, Jesus and His disciples made their way to a village. Martha lived in that village. Her sister was Mary, and her brother was Lazarus (see John 11:1-2). Note the phrase, "Martha welcomed him into her house." There is no reference to a husband here. The house is identified as her house, We read in John 12:

(2) So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. (3) Mary, therefore, took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. – John 12:2-3 ESV

Observe how Martha's sister Mary took a pound of expensive ointment and anointed Jesus' feet. The point is this: if Martha had a home and Mary, her

sister, had expensive ointment, it appears that she had a fairly well-to-do family. Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. Jesus and His disciples depended on such hospitality in their ministry. Martha generously provides what He needs.

Verse 39

Luke tells us that Martha's sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. The phrase shows us that Jesus was not relaxing at Martha's home. He took advantage of the occasion to teach those present. Luke does not tell us how many were at this meal. His disciples were likely present as were Mary and Martha. While it would have been natural for Mary to help her sister prepare the meal for such a group, she opted to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to Him teach.

Verse 40

As Mary sat at Jesus' feet, Martha busied herself with serving the meal. The word Luke uses to describe Martha here is περισπάω (perispáō). It is derived from the Greek word περί, meaning around, and spáō, meaning to draw. Together they carry the sense of drawing or taking from all around. Imagine a person gathering papers that have scattered in the wind. He rushes in all directions, picking up those papers before the wind carries them off and they are beyond his reach. This describes Martha. She rushed from one thing to another, trying to meet everyone's needs.

Luke describes Martha as distracted. In other words, she seems to be losing perspective. She had invited the Lord Jesus into her home but He was no longer the focus of her attention. Her preparations and the food she was

serving took Jesus' place in her thoughts, actions and attitude.

Note how the stress of her busyness explodes in bitterness and anger toward both Jesus and her sister Mary.

First, Martha expresses frustration at Jesus for not noticing her efforts in the words, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? She had been serving Jesus and her guests. She was running to and fro trying to keep up with everything and becoming very stressed in the process. She felt the need for help, but everyone was sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to His teaching. All the responsibility of caring for the guests was falling on her. She felt unappreciated and used.

The words, "Lord, do you not care," express her feelings. She felt Jesus should have noticed her efforts and understood how she was feeling used. Who among us has not felt what Martha felt that day? There is a need in

our flesh to be noticed, appreciated and honoured. While that in itself is not necessarily sinful, it can quickly lead us to become bitter, envious and angry. In this case, Martha even accused Jesus of not caring for her. The need to be noticed can be the fruit of pride in our lives. Martha was dealing with a lot of things in her life at this time. Her busyness and sense of not being appreciated or noticed explode in anger, resentment and bitterness.

Second, observe how Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her. It is unclear why Martha does not speak directly to Mary here. It is also unclear whether she speaks these words to Jesus alone or in the presence of all her guests. If she spoke to them before all the guests, we can imagine how Mary must have felt. She would have been publicly embarrassed and shamed. Possibly this was Martha's intention.

Verse 41

Jesus' response to Martha indicates that He understood what she was feeling. Observe first how He repeats her name twice. He does this to emphasize His point. He does this also out of compassion for her and what she is feeling at that moment.

Second, Jesus tells her that she is anxious. In other words, Martha was troubled by many things. This trouble was overcoming her and taking control of her thoughts, actions and attitudes. She was speaking to Jesus at that moment out of those anxious thoughts.

Third, Jesus told Martha that she was also troubled about many things. The word $\tauurbázō$ ($turbázō$) speaks of a crowd with all the noise associated with it. It reflects a noisy state of mind that is in chaos and confusion. Jesus addresses the real issue for Martha here. It was not that Mary was not

helping, but rather that she was allowing the busyness of the day to distract her, keep her from her true priority and cause her to become bitter and angry in her heart. While her intentions in inviting Jesus into her home were generous, she stood guilty now before Him with a heart filled with sinful attitudes and misguided priorities.

Verse 42

Having spoken to Martha about her anxieties and troubles, Jesus moves now to speak about Mary and her choice to sit at His feet.

Note first the phrase, "One thing is necessary." The word necessary is χρεία (chreía) and refers to a debt. It is also used to reflect a personal deficit or need. Jesus is not diminishing Martha's efforts to provide nourishment for their physical bodies here. What He is telling her, however, is that there is something

even more important than physical food, that is, the nourishment of their souls. Martha, in her busyness, had failed to see how important the work of Jesus was on that occasion. She elevated what she was doing above the teaching of Jesus. She felt at that moment that feeding her guest with physical food took priority over the feeding of their souls.

By sitting at Jesus' feet and not assisting Martha, Mary was revealing her priority. She gave the ministry of Jesus priority over Martha's ministry. She reflects the attitude of Job when he said:

(12) I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food. – Job 23:12 ESV

Jesus was touched by the attitude Mary demonstrated that day. Her passion was for Him and His teaching. She was willing to forego the hunger in her belly to hear the words of His lips.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

F. Wayne Mac Leod

F. Wayne Mac Leod was born in Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, Canada and received his education at Ontario Bible College, University of Waterloo, and Ontario Theological Seminary. He was ordained at Hespeler Baptist Church, Cambridge, Ontario in 1991.



He and his wife served as missionaries

on the islands of Mauritius and Reunion from 1985-1993 where Wayne was involved in church development and leadership training. Wayne is currently a full-time missionary serving with Action International Ministries. You can learn more about this ministry at <https://www.lighttomypath.ca>