

THE GOSPELS: A BRIEF BACKGROUND, OUTLINE, ANALYSIS, & COMMENTARY of Matthew and Mark

**By Willis C. Newman
(B.A., M.Ed., M.Div., Ph.D., D.Min.)**

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INTRODUCTION

This work is not meant to be exhaustive in scope, but to introduce you, the student, to a major overview of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. These notes are the culmination of many years of my teaching New Testament studies, but as time rolls on, and the Lord permits, I will add more information. Here you get the basics.

This work is written in outline form. The reason being I first put them down in lecture form, and have kept up the pattern. Since I am still teaching, and this is an online course, I trust the format is still useful to you.

The work is organized in several major sections. First, I cover an overview of the Gospels that includes the nature and critical issues of the Gospels along with a brief presentation of the cultural and historical context. More details on background material can be found in my New Testament Survey work. In this first section, I devote an overview of the life of Jesus Christ, and its significance to the world today.

Second, you will find an introduction, outline, and analysis of the gospels: Matthew and Mark. In another ebook, I have placed the Gospel of Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles – also with an introduction, outline, and analysis.

You will find a general bibliography for the entire New Testament at the back. I also include several online sources that are invaluable for you who are taking this course online.

The table of contents will give you greater detail in following the material, and locating various subjects. I give the page numbers of the outlines of each book that will break down in greater detail the organization of the material, and how to find comment on various subjects.

One magnificent product of the computer age is being able to put this work in pdf format. You can use this as an index. Just type in the word you are looking for and Adobe will find them for you.

I wish you all the best as you undertake this study about the wonderful life of our wonderful Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Willis C. Newman
Tacoma, Washington, 2009

About the Author

I am reluctant to talk about myself, but I must to establish a degree of credibility. I also place this here so you can get a little acquainted with me. I received my B.A. in Psychology and M.Ed. in counseling from the University of Portland. I earned the M.Div. from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (pastoral studies), the Ph.D. in church administration from California Graduate School of Theology, and the D.Min. in cross cultural studies from Faith Evangelical Seminary (Tacoma).

I also have taken other courses, and obtained certificates. For example, I have the "Grad Certificate" in Bible from Multnomah Bible College (Portland, Oregon), and a certificate in fund raising management from the University of Washington.

I grew up in central Idaho on a cattle ranch. In my youth I was a cowboy, sawmill worker, construction worker, and did other labor type work. I have three living children: Willie, Teri, and Matthew, who I just adopted. Matt is the son of my Filipina wife, Esmeralda. We have been married almost 10 years. I have six grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.

I served eight years as a pastor, and seven years as a missionary to the Kingdom of Tonga where I established Faith Seminary - Tonga. I have taught at the college or graduate school level for over 20 years at such places as International College & Graduate School of Theology (Hawaii), Faith Evangelical Seminary (Tacoma), and at the community college level in America. I have taught as guest lecturer in the South Pacific for International School of Theology (Manila).

I am an Adjunct Assistant Professor at a community college, and a Professor at Faith Evangelical Seminary. My favorite music is American Country and Western, Hawaiian Slack guitar, blues, and Jazz. My favorite sports are boxing, rodeo, and American professional football. This may sound corny, but the book that has influenced me the most is the Christian Bible.

All the best to you my friend as you study the wonderful word of God through the Bible. You will do well. Stay encouraged in the work of Christ.

Dr. Willis Newman, 2009

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THE GOSPELS: BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The group of four books in the Christian New Testament called the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) describes the life of Jesus Christ, and sets forth His teachings. The actual word, “gospel,” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word, “godspell,” which meant “good tidings.” Later in history, the work came to refer to “the story regarding God.” *Euangelion*, is the Greek word that was translated into gospel. *Euangelion* means “good news.”

In the New Testament, the gospel never refers to a group of writings, but to the message of good news that God has provided salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 1:1; 15:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 9; Mark 1:1; Acts 20:24; Ephesians 6:15; 1:13; 2 Corinthians 4:4.) It was about A.D. 150 that the word, *euangelion*, was used to refer to the writings regarding the message of Christ.

Before we probe into the contents of the four Gospels, we must provide an introductory background concerning the Gospels. We will study four basic broad areas: the nature of the Gospels, critical issues, the cultural and historical context, and an overview of Jesus Christ.

Under the nature of the Gospels, we will note the characteristics, number and development of the Gospel accounts. Under the critical issues, we will explore the canonicity, synoptic problem, and form criticism. Regarding the cultural context, we will briefly scan the political and cultural issues, and then bring into focus the factors that God used to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world of humanity.

Finally, I will present an overview of Christ in his relationship with the Gospels and Old Testament, identify the Person of Jesus, summarize the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, then portray the life of Christ in outline form.

The nature of the Gospels

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPELS.

The Four Gospels are placed at the first of the N.T., because they record the beginning events of the Christian movement in history. These records were not the first documents written regarding Christianity, but are designed to record the central events surrounding the genesis of the Christian Faith.

The early church viewed the Gospels as a unit, the good news of Jesus Christ in history, His life, ministry, and teachings. Though accurate historical, geographic, and biographical information is recorded, the main, dominant emphasis is on the

spiritual message, meaning and impact of Christ entering this world in human flesh, living among men, revealing God and His purpose, being crucified, buried, raising from the dead and ascending to Heaven.

This astonishing historical event surrounding the Person and work of Christ primarily provides for the payment of sin and granting eternal life to those who believe (John 3:16, 36; 17:1-3; 20:30, 31). Furthermore, this message of good news is to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth until Christ returns and the next phase of history is established (Matthew 28:18-20).

II. THE NUMBER OF GOSPELS.

Many gospels were written in those early days, but only four were recognized by the early church to be inspired by God. The others, for example, the Gospel of Nicodemus and Gospel of Thomas, are considered not be inspired by God, are unreliable, and add material regarded as fanciful and legendary.

The four Gospels were written to evangelize and disciple new converts (John 20:30, 31; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 15:15, 16; Luke 24:45-48). The Apostles were able, in the beginning, to communicate personally to their flocks, but as the Christian movement expanded, and the Apostles grew older, the need became apparent that the story and teachings of Christ must be placed in written form to insure accurate transmission of information from one generation to the next.

We are faced with the question of, “Why do we have several gospel accounts, and why just four – as opposed to, say, two or six, etc.?” One major factor was the geographical distance between Christian groups, which set the situation that caused several Apostles (or close associates) to write their respective accounts. At least six historical factors existed that resulted in us having four gospels.

A. COMPETITION. When a gospel was written in a particular locality, the Christians of that region would favor “their” account. They would resist the adoption of a single account of Christ, if that account was from a different locality, and may have priority over “their” gospel. Of course, eventually all the four Gospels were folded into the canon, and accepted as equal. This tendency of human nature can be seen in the present day preferences over different translations of the Bible. Some like one version, others prefer others.

B. ABUNDANT INFORMATION. The plurality of the Gospels was encouraged, because of the great interest in the life and ministry of Christ coupled to the large amount of information available. Thus, many people would be motivated to write of the event. For example, note the large numbers of books written about Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy’s assassination, and other significant leaders and events. (Cf. Luke 1:1-4).

C. TARGETED GROUPS. The Gospels were written primarily to four separate groups of people, and reflected each group’s unique outlook to reality. Matthew was written to the Jews. Mark was directed to the Romans. Luke was aimed at

the Greeks, and John was offered to humanity in general. These various groups, because of their cultural preferences, would identify with the account nearest their outlook on life.

D. SECTARIAN GROUPS. The various heretical or sectarian groups also adopted and promoted the particular Gospel that gave the greatest justification to their unique viewpoints. For example, Matthew became associated with the Ebionites, Luke with Marcion, and John with the Gnostic groups. Different Gospel accounts would bring balance, accuracy, correction, and the full story of Jesus, His ministry and message.

E. SUPPLEMENTAL AND COMPLEMENTARY ADVANTAGE. The early church may have considered the variety of vantage points given by the several gospel accounts to be supplemental and complementary to each other regarding the life, ministry and teachings of Christ. Since none of the Gospels are contradictory, the four Gospels written from different viewpoints, is enrichment to the gospel story – not a cause for confusion or concern. Studying a diamond from several viewpoints increases one’s appreciation for the gem – likewise with Jesus Christ.

F. LEGAL PRINCIPLE. Moses, the great lawgiver, laid down the principle in Deuteronomy 19:15 that in a legal setting two or more witnesses were required to establish the certainty of an event. Consequently, four witnesses give added weight and validity to the gospel story.

G. GOD’S AUTHORSHIP. In the final analysis, it must be remembered that the reason for four Gospels, rather than some other number, rests in the sovereign choice of God. He is the author of Holy Scripture even though He unfolds His work in history through the agency of men.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS.

A. THE ISSUE OF RELIABILITY. The writing of the Gospels did not occur until a generation after the actual events; thus, the potential of error in the documents exists. People make mistakes, and memories become cloudy and distorted. To dispel the notion of unreliability, however, the following must be considered.

1. There was the personal testimony, eyewitnesses, and guidance of those close to Christ. Those individuals built up a common oral tradition of the Gospel story. Matthew wrote his Gospel from his own eyewitness account as an Apostle (Matthew 9:9; 10:2), as did John (John 20:21, 24, 25). The point is this: the foundation of the Gospels is they are the recollection of eyewitnesses, written directly by eye-witnesses, or heard from eye-witness by the writer.
2. This oral tradition about the life of Jesus was repeated over and over; thus, keeping it clear in people’s mind.

3. The Gospel event was central, extraordinary, and at the core of the Christian movement. It was not some minor event forgotten over time. Such a major event would not invite alteration. For example, Pearl Harbor and Normandy Beach of WWII are still vivid in people's mind.
4. The early church was protective of the preservation of the story. Written accounts would not have been accepted, if they differed from the accepted oral tradition. For example, Mark wrote the eyewitness accounts of the Apostle Peter. He was a close friend and probably convert of Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Eusebius records in his history that Papias (A.D. 60-130) was a disciple of John and companion of Polycarp. Papias says Mark was the interpreter of Peter, and that, "he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely."¹
5. Minor differences arise from the incidents being reported by various eyewitnesses whose accounts may differ and/or stress different aspects of the event, but which are not contradictory.
6. The writers varied their accounts of the same event for this purpose: to highlight events or specific points of teaching directed toward a unique audience. It was not their desire to precisely record historical facts in their exact chronology, nor were they trying to contradict another Gospel or the oral tradition.

The authors wrote from different perspectives to different audiences with different purposes. Material was selected to support the writer's thesis and appeal to the audience. For example John wrote, "*Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:30, 31).

7. The compilation of the Gospels was carefully undertaken. Luke, for example, carefully researched his Gospel. He states, "*Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught*" (Luke 1:1-4).
8. The writers were able to write accurate history. They lived during the time when the Bible events actually happened. The writers wrote as eyewitness or from the accounts of eyewitnesses. All the New Testament

¹ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers*, Vol. I, 2nd series. 1890-95. Reprint (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 172, 173

was written in the first century. James, the first letter, could have been written within 12 years from the death of Christ. The date of writing is between A.D. 45-49. Most letters were written in the 50's and 60's. John's writings were written in the 80's and 90's.

9. The writers intended to write accurate history. The literary genre is history. The writers were real, credible men who wrote down what they genuinely believed to be true and at a time near the events they recorded.
10. The writers did write accurate history. When checked with external evidence, the New Testament is correct as to date, names, cities, events, and other information one expects to find in a historical account.²
11. Finally, we may be assured that God in His superintending of the human compilation of the inspired record kept it without error in the original manuscripts. Jesus said to his Apostles that New Testament revelation was to come (John 14:26; 15:13-15), Paul said that revelation did come (1 Corinthians 2:10; Hebrews 2:1-4), how it would come (2 Peter 1:20,21; cf. Luke 1:1-4); what the nature of that revelation was (2 Timothy 3:15-17), and Jesus said when that Revelation ceased (Revelation 22:20,21).³

B. THE LANGUAGE OF THE GOSPELS

The language of the New Testament is written in what is known as Koine Greek, which was the language of the common people in the Hellenistic period (300 B.C. – A.D. 500). The Greek language began in about 800 B.C. or earlier as in the works of Homer and Hesiod. Greek is still a living language. Greek can be generally classified into “classical Greek,” which was the language of the city-state of Athens. This type was Attic, a branch of Ionic dialect.

During Alexander the Great's conquering of the civilized world (which included the lands of the Bible: Persia, Egypt, etc.), different dialects and peoples merged, and the Greek language blended into what is known as the Koine Greek.

There is the issue of Aramaic language origins of the Gospels. Aramaic is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. It is generally assumed that Aramaic was the colloquial language in the land of Palestine, dating back to the return of the exiles from Babylon.

It may be possible that the Gospels could have been written in Aramaic since Jesus probably spoke Aramaic as His habitual language. He also spoke Greek and Hebrew. Parts of the Old Testament are written in Aramaic (Jeremiah 10:11;

² On the reliability of the NT, see F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents Are they Reliable?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1943). See also Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

³ The reader is referred to this writer's little book, *You Can Believe the Bible*, for further details regarding the inerrancy of the Bible and other issues regarding Revelation.

Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:8 – 6:18), which was also the diplomatic language of the Assyrian kingdom. Consequently, the position is held by some that the Greek translations were translated from Aramaic originals.

There are, however, at least seven objections to this theory.

1. Objective evidence of such original documents does not exist.
2. There exists much disagreement among the theory advocates as to particular instances of supposed mistranslations from Aramaic into Greek. Further, it is unlikely that such mistranslations would have persisted into the Greek Gospel traditions.
3. There is consistent opposition to the theory from the bulk of scholars.
4. There were Greek speaking converts from the beginning of the church who would have needed Greek records of the Gospels.
5. Since the gospel was to go to the entire world, and Greek was the common language for the Roman Empire, it seems logical that God would use the language understood by the most people.
6. The Septuagint (LXX) is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, and was used by the Jews during that time; consequently, it seems that God would continue the precedent with the New Testament.
7. Lastly, there was not a continuous Aramaic literary tradition of that time.

C. THE STORY FRAMEWORK AND FLOW IS CONSISTENT.

Certain aspects of the gospel story are consistent in all four gospels.

1. The work and ministry of John the Baptist, and its intimate relation to Jesus, stands as the starting point.
2. The main body addresses the activities of Jesus in ministry. There were acts of power, and acts of teaching and preaching.
3. The flow of the gospel story climaxes in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

D. COMMON EMPHASIS OF THE GOSPELS.

Specific things are generally stressed throughout the story.

1. The story unfolds in two particular geographical areas: Galilee and Jerusalem.
2. The story groups the players into two general divisions: Christ's disciples pitted against the formal, official religious organizations.
3. The story portrays the ministry of Christ in unique relationship to the Old Testament in which Christ was the promised Messiah.
4. When compared to the rest of the New Testament, the Gospels consist of the core deposit of the teaching of the New Testament Church.

Finally, the early church did not have an agreed upon sequence as to the order of the Gospels. The Eastern Church recognizes the order we now use while the Western Church had Matthew, John, Luke, Mark.

E. EVANGELICAL SUMMARY OF THE GOSPELS.

None of the Gospels are complete accounts of what Jesus did (John 20:30; Luke 1:1; Mark 1:1). Each Gospel was selective in line with the unique purpose of the individual writer, and is complete in the sense of accomplishing the intent of the writer.

It is said by some that since there are differences in the same account in different Gospels, then they were not written by one author, but many. One main difference is that the order or sequence of appearance in the text varies among the Gospels. Another difference is that an event may appear in two Gospels, but not the other.

The answer to this threat to the integrity of the New Testament is that the differences and similarities are because of different purposes that call for different methods of investigation and different sources. Jesus said the same things many times; thus, the exact phrasing could be slightly different.

The Gospels are honest attempts to order the life of Jesus for teaching and evangelistic reasons. They are the core of apostolic preaching and teaching and are arranged into different structures under the direction of the Holy Spirit for different purposes. The content clearly indicates a common pool of information, subject of writing, and inspiration of Scripture.

Critical issues of the Gospels.

In this section, I introduce you to three issues of importance that are studied and discussed by New Testament scholars: the canon, synoptic problem, and form criticism.

I. CONCEPT OF CANONICITY SUMMARIZED

A. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Defined: The "Canon of Scripture" refers to those writings that make up the Bible and constitute the norm for the Christian Faith. Canon = rod, ruler = standard or model.

Major issue: which is that revelation given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16); how is that inspiration demonstrated; how can we recognize inspiration?

Promise of Christ: He authenticated the O.T. and promised the activity of the Holy Spirit in teaching future truth (Luke 24:44; John 16:13 -15). The Apostles stated they received revelation (1 Corinthians. 2:9, 10) and Jesus said when revelation ceased (22:18, 19).

Following are the tests used to determine if a book was regarded to be included in the Bible.

B. TESTS OF CANON

1. Apostolic or Prophetic origin: was it written or backed by an Apostle?
2. Witness of the Holy Spirit: an assurance given to believers when the Word is heard or preached. This is a part of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 10:3.4.16 see also Romans 8:16; Acts 5:32; John 16:7-15; I John 4:6).
3. Recognition by the Church: was there a reception, or acceptance by the early church at large?
4. Content: was the book of sufficient spiritual character? Did it center on the person and work of Christ? Did it agree doctrinally with other Scripture?
5. Inspiration: did the book give internal evidence of inspiration?

C. KEY CONSIDERATIONS OF CANON.

This is important: Scripture is self- authenticating and the church councils only "recognized" their inspiration and authority -- the councils did not "pronounce" the books inspired of God.

God guided the councils so the canon was recognized. The Canon was closed at the completion of the book of Revelation. See Rev. 22:18.19; 2 Peter 1:3; Proverbs. 30:6; Jude 3; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2:1-4; John 4:25 cf. John 14:26; 15:15.

Many scholars agree on the termination of what could be recognized as New Testament Scripture. For example, Expositors Greek Testament on Hebrews 1:2, "The contrast in the new revelation is implied in the word *ελαλησεν* (has spoken) indicating that the work was once for all accomplished." Lenski calls "has spoken" an aorist of finality. See also F.F. Bruce in his Commentary on Hebrews.

D. HISTORY OF THE BIBLE CANON.

1. The Old Testament was settled in the 5th century B.C. by Ezra and the Great Synagogue; it was recognized as authentic by Christ (Luke 24:44, 45).
2. Second there is the period where the Apostles claimed authority for their writings (I Thessalonians. 5:27; Col. 4:16).
3. Third there is the post apostolic period in which all the N.T. books were recognized by the church at large except Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2, 3 John.
4. Finally, the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) listed, and recognized all 27 canonical N.T. books.⁴

E. CANONICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

Now I focus on the Gospels. The Gospel canon was recognized by the early church fathers. Though the formal canon was not settled finally until A.D. 397, one can identify which books and gospels were considered canon by the early church fathers by their own writings. Following are some examples.

1. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (A.D. 130-140?) as found in his work *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord* as quoted by the historian, Eusebius.

⁴ Recommended reading on the Canon of Scripture includes F.F. Bruce, The Canon of Scripture (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

2. Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165), in his *First Apology*.
3. Tatian (c. A.D. 110-172) in the work *The Diatessaron* as referred to by Eusebius.
4. The Muratorian Canon (c. A.D. 170).
5. Irenaeus (wrote @ A.D. 175-195). He was the first theologian of the Old Catholic Church, and a student of Polycarp who had direct contact with the Lord's apostles. He mentions the four Gospels in his work, *Against Heresies III*.
6. The work of the heretics helps to identify the canon. These were men who wrote against the accepted canon. Of special note was the canon devised by Marcion (c. A.D. 144), which quickly stirred up opposition from Christian theologians.
7. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 155-220), as referred to by Eusebius.
8. Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-220), a theologian from Carthage, North Africa.
9. Origen of Alexandria (c. A.D. 185-254), according to Eusebius.
10. Eusebius A.D. 260-340) was a famous church historian. He mentions many others who recognized the four Gospels in his *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius*. His work can be found online at the Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

From here I turn to a plaguing problem regarding the Gospels. Actually, it is a manufactured problem, but it must be addressed. Let me explain.

II. THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM OF THE GOSPELS.

A. THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) view and present the life and ministry of Christ in a similar way; thus, they are called the synoptic (a viewing together) Gospels. The name "synoptic" is from "syn" (together), and "optanoma" (to see). The three Gospels have a close interrelation in content and way of expression. There are both similarities and differences. The Gospel of John, however, is different and stands apart from the synoptic Gospels.

Now to address the problem.

B. THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM.

It is claimed by traditional scholars that all four Gospels are independent eye witness accounts of the life of Christ. They are eye witness reports or based on eye witness reports. Differences between Gospel accounts are explained as the normal differences among eye-witnesses.

With the advance of modern critical (liberal) scholarship, there have been significant sustained attempts to discredit the Gospels, and the whole Bible for that matter. One

strategy has been to attack the synoptic Gospels. Opponents say that there is a massive problem with the mutual relations, or the agreements and differences in the common material presented in the first three Gospels.

They say that if each Gospel is supposed to be an independent account of the life of Jesus, then the three should not be so exactly similar. Furthermore, opponents say, if the synoptic Gospels are dependent on each other or related, then they cannot be independent accounts.

In a brief response from an Evangelical viewpoint, what is wrong with different documents talking about common events? It happens every day in our newspapers. Different reporters talk about the same event in their respective papers.

Secondly, just because different reports or documents talk about the same event does not mean one copied from the other. Actually, that practice is called plagiarism. For example, two newspaper reporters covering an accident write from their own perspective. The reports would be similar and different in details depending on the emphasis of the reporter. Far be it that they would copy each other. But let's continue.

The only way this problem can be solved, liberals say, is to assume a literary dependence between the three accounts (Gospels). The authors of the gospels, whoever they may have been, must have copied from each other, or else written from common written sources. In any case, the synoptic gospels cannot be independent eye witness accounts. Following are some suggestions to explain this problem, according to liberals.

1. The Gospels all came from a proto-gospel, which was a single original gospel no longer in existence.
2. The Gospels come from an earlier collection of writings. Some say there were two basic documents: Mark, from which Matthew and Luke copied, and another source which provided the non-Mark material. This document is called "Q", but it no longer exists. Another version is the four document theory: Mark, Q, which came from Antioch, M which came from Jerusalem and was Matthew's source, and L, which came from Caesarea and was Luke's source.
3. The Gospels owe their existence to various oral traditions that make up a proto gospel. This view claims that the teachings of Jesus were gathered and maintained in unrelated separate fragments. Each Gospel, then, drew from the various independent sources. To the extent the writers utilized the same fragments, their works agreed.
4. The gospels are the result of interdependence (copying) among the synoptic writers. Much emphasis is placed on this explanation.

If the liberal view is correct, then it devastates the traditional view of the Gospels. We are left without a trustworthy Bible. Here are the problems broken down and summarized.

1. Assuming literary borrowing places the borrower (Gospel writer) at a time distance from the events they relate. The result is no longer an eyewitness account. There is a layer of tradition or something else wedged in between the writer and the actual event – the life of Christ. The Gospel testimony becomes second or third hand – or merely hearsay.
2. The three-fold independent witness contained in the three synoptic Gospels is; consequently, reduced to only one.
3. Literary dependence makes every sentence more or less a falsification of what was originally stated. That is to say, the Gospel accounts become merely a reworking of some distant original. Furthermore, if the Gospel accounts claim they were eye witness accounts, but in fact were not, then they are making false statements.
4. The integrity of the New Testament is called into question, because it is no longer what it claims to be: independent accounts of the life of Christ.

So, how can Evangelicals respond to the liberal's attempt to disprove the Bible? Keep reading to see how.

C. SYNOPTIC SOLUTION

1. The literary dependence theory is not proven. It is not fact. The “problem” is an assumption, a manufactured problem. In other words, similarities and differences do not prove that the gospels are not the recollection of eyewitnesses, written directly by eye witnesses, or heard from eye witnesses. The traditional view is wrongly discriminated against.
2. For example, if two newspaper reporters report on the same event (whether a car accident or political rally), one would expect similarities and differences in the reports they file. It certainly does not prove that neither reporter was at the scene of the reported event, and that they really copied from a third reporter.
3. It overlooks that the Gospels were written for different purposes, to different audiences, and selected unique material to support their particular emphasis. Secondly, the one big story is the one life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Hence, one should expect similarities and differences.
4. Building on the argument above, there are other explanations for similarities in the Gospels. The Gospel of Christ was preached orally through the empire. Some probably kept notes and diaries. There was a common oral body of information, thus, there should be similarities. Furthermore, the Gospel writers knew each other, were with Christ together, and probably compared each other's notes. Similarities should occur.

5. In spite of the liberal assertions, the verbal similarities in the synoptic gospels are comparatively small and extend chiefly to identical accounts of Jesus' words, and to specific and unalterable vocabulary that is required by the nature of what is being related.
6. The liberal assault challenges the integrity and good character of the Gospels and the Gospel writers. It is saying, without evidence, that the authors of the Gospels were liars, and what they said about Jesus were lies and fabricated myths. It calls into question the truthfulness of the Christian Church that followed, and who believed the traditional view for centuries. In fact, to draw a comparison, it is like saying that the Constitution of the United States was not written by the founding fathers, but rather by a remote mountain tribe from Peru that no longer exists – and coincidentally, none of the tribal documents exist that were used to make up the Constitution.⁵
7. Authors of that time cited their sources. The early Church Fathers cited their sources. Ancient historians cited sources. The New Testament writers cited sources they took from the Old Testament. Consequently, seems reasonable that they would cite their sources, if any. Actually, Luke does cite sources. To say they copied from each other and did not cite independent sources accuses them of plagiarism.

But the movement to discredit the Gospels does not end with the synoptic problem. Following is another way that critics of the New Testament use to dishonor the Word of God.

III. FORM CRITICISM

Before the coming of modern biblical criticism in the 18th century, the church believed in the historical reliability of the Bible. Starting with the Enlightenment, the Bible came under question and eventually was treated like any other religious book of human making. The trustworthiness of Scripture was rejected and an antisupernatural world view was accepted. Three main tools for NT studies came about: form criticism, redaction criticism and literary criticism. The latter two are further developments of the first. Rudolf Bultmann made NT form criticism popular. Five assumptions underpin Form Criticism in its attempt to explain away the true origins of the New Testament.

1. Form Criticism believes the Synoptic Gospels form a particular kind of literature known as folk literature, tales, and sagas that contain stories of concern and importance to a particular people.
2. Form Criticism believes the Gospels are non-objective reflections of the community life and faith of the early church. The historical Christ cannot be known with any certainty as He is merely a mythical being interpreted for us by the church. In other words, the Form Critic claims the Gospels are not real history but

⁵ For a brilliant and vigorous discourse regarding the synoptic problem, the reader is referred to Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992).

stories made up by various editors and writers in the early church and who reflected and recorded their own subjective faith.

3. The individual segments of oral tradition were eventually laced together by the evangelists (editors) at random and at their own whim or fancy. This gives the modern critic the right to give them any setting or interpretation he/she wishes. These segments (units) are of various kinds, or, forms.
4. The Gospels are creations that arise out of specific community situations or life situations (*sitz em leben*) of the early church and not in the actual history of Jesus.
5. The purpose of the process of Form Criticism is to separate the original segments of the tradition from those portions added later by the editors in the church. The careful study of the editing process and various forms can produce this distinction, according to the modern critic. There are said to be five forms.
Pronouncement stories: short incidents that terminate in a famous saying.

Miracles stories.

Stories about Jesus.

Sayings of Jesus.

The passion story.

Form Criticism may be of value to identify forms of literature in the Gospel story. However, its shortcomings are many and harmful for a sound approach to understanding the Gospels. Following are several reasons why.

1. The genuine, primitive teachings of the Gospels were not rare, as says Form Criticism. Those teachings did not need to be invented and added to the Bible by the church in later years. The available material was abundant, definite and detailed. Jesus spoke hundreds of times to thousands of people and in a systematic manner to a core of followers for three years.
2. Form critics differ greatly among themselves as to the actual forms. Some even say the Gospels are not subject to the standard forms because the Gospels are different from the kind of folk literature from which the literary forms are derived. Much confusion exists.
3. The loyal followers of Jesus would not have ascribed to Him that which did not originate with Him. If they did try to make up stories, they would have been discredited by thousands of other Christians of the early church who did know the correct historical stories.

4. Form critics say there was lack of interest in biographical material about Jesus. That is why the “editors” of the New Testament had to make up stories about the life and sayings of Christ, they say. They are wrong. Jesus was the grandest interest that occupied the early church. The writers were not just interested in recording their own existential experiences, as says the critic, but rather their occupation was with the true history of Jesus. They made clear distinctions between their own words and those of Jesus.
5. Form Criticism makes the Christian community at large the creator of the Gospels as opposed to individuals. This runs counter to the testimony of Scripture in express statements and patterns of inspiration.
6. The greatest fault of Form Criticism is its antisupernatural bias. As a result, they cannot believe the miracles in the New Testament or anything that speaks of the supernatural interacting in history. For example, this means that any miracle automatically must be classed as non-history and treated as a myth. Unfortunately, this antisupernatural approach is the starting point of their biblical research. Eta Linnemann writes:

“Research is conducted *ut si Deus non daretur* (“as if there were no God”). That means the reality of God is excluded from consideration from the start, even if the researcher acknowledges that God could bear witness of himself in his Word.”⁶

Rudolf Bultmann, a very liberal theologian writes: “The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character...Man’s knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world.”⁷

With this we conclude these critical issues regarding the Gospels, and turn our attention to a very limited summary of the cultural and historical context of the Gospels. The important thing to remember is this: you can believe and trust the Bible.

The cultural & historical context of the Gospels

I. THE POLITICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT⁸

A. THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

In the world of western civilization, the entire civilized world (with few exceptions) was under the power of the vast empire of Rome during the rise of Christianity. The empire stretched from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, and the Danube to the Sahara Desert. The empire took its name from the capital city of Italy, which was founded in 753 B.C.

⁶ Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 84.

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961) pp. 1, 4.

⁸ For an overview of history, the reader is referred to F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

The Roman state grew from a tiny community comprising a collection of local villages ruled by a king to a republic by the beginning of the 5th century B.C. Through various alliances and military victories, the Romans ruled over the entire Italian peninsula by 265 B.C. Their next phase of world conquest involved two centuries of military struggle with Carthage in north Africa and its great empire. These were known as the Punic Wars. The climax was in 146 B.C. when the Roman general, Scipio Aemilianus, defeated the city of Carthage and razed it to the ground. Carthage is now known as Tunis located in Tunisia in North Africa. Islam is its official religion.

The booty gathered by Rome included North Africa and Spain, Macedonia, Achaia, Pergamum, and Asia Minor. In 63 B.C., Pompey organized Syria into a province and annexed Judea. Eventually, the mighty Roman Empire crumbled on the violent night of A.D. August 24, 410 when Alaric, leader of the Germanic tribes from the north, stormed the walls of Rome and plundered the city for three days.

Rome ruled her Empire through a system of provincial governments. When a country or city-state was captured, it was regarded as a province and was granted relative freedom, but remained subject to Rome. If the province was peaceful, a procounsel (e.g. Acts 13:7) ruled who was responsible to the Roman Senate. They were appointed yearly.

More troublesome provinces were governed by Prefects, Procurators, or Proprætors, who were appointed by and responsible to the Emperor. At the time of Christ, Palestine was under the Procurator, Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:11). Armies were also stationed in the more turbulent provinces, such as Palestine.

Roman colonies were also begun at strategic places within the provinces to stimulate unity and loyalty to Rome. Philippi, for example, became a Roman colony, and was a Roman military outpost with special privileges. The Greek language was the common and business language. Following is a list of Roman Emperors from 27 B.C. to A.D. 117.

- Octavian, or Augustus Caesar: 27 B.C. – A.D. 14
- Tiberius: A.D. 14-37
- Caligula: A.D. 37 – 41
- Claudius: 41-54
- Nero: 54-68
- Galba: 68
- Otho: 69
- Vitellius: 69
- Vespasian: 69-79
- Titus: 79-81
- Domitian: 81-96
- Nerva: 96-98
- Trajan: 98-117

B. THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

The Hellenistic civilization refers to the spreading of Greek culture over the non-Greek peoples that were conquered by Alexander the Great. The Hellenistic civilization was a

fusion of Greek and Middle-Eastern cultures. The main cultural centers expanded from mainland Greece, to Pergamon, Rhodes, Antioch and Alexandria. Historians usually use a starting date of 323 B.C.

The Greek culture and language diffused throughout the Roman Empire. The Greeks were the teachers, physicians, accountants and overseers, while still remaining in most cases as slaves of the Romans. The Greek universities at Athens, Rhodes, Tartus, and others, were attended by young aristocratic Romans. Greek became the language of culture and diplomacy, and also the trade language thorough out the Empire. Even Rome became a Greek speaking city.

As mentioned, Alexander the Great was the major influence of Hellenization. Philip of Macedonia molded the Macedonians into a unified military state. In a span of 20 years, he organized mountain peasants and shepherds into an army of unusual capabilities. The army subjected the Greek city-states. Upon his death (337 B.C.), Philip's aggressive son, Alexander, took over rule.

Like his father, Alexander was a military genius, and had been educated and raised in Greek culture. One of his teachers was Aristotle. In 334 B.C., he invaded Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and defeated the Persian armies at the battle of the Granicus River. Again, he routed the Persians at the battle of Issus. From there, he marched through Syria into Egypt where he founded the city of Alexandria.

With Syria and Egypt under his control, Alexander finally crushed the Persian army at Arbela. He then quickly occupied Babylon, Susa and Persepolis, which were the capitals of Persia. He later expanded his borders to the Indus River in India. His influence brought the Greek language and culture to his conquered world. Alexander contracted a fever, possibly malaria, typhoid, or viral encephalitis, and died in 324 B.C. at the young age of 32.

His kingdom was partitioned, and divided to his generals. The territory was divided into four sections. The Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt based at Alexandria; The Seleucid dynasty in Syria and Mesopotamia based at Antioch; The Antigonid dynasty in Macedon and central Greece; The Attalid dynasty in Anatolia based at Pergamum.

Seluecus eventually headed a dynasty in Syria, and Ptolemy reigned in Egypt. Warring against each other, they kept Palestine in constant conflict, because the armies kept traveling up and down the narrow strip of land which was Israel. Battles were fought in this corridor with Palestine first going to one power, and then to the other.

As a result of the Seleucid influence, Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, became a melting pot for the East and West. Greek language, literature, and culture were widely disseminated in that city, which became the common

medium of contact between the East and West. Antioch later became a major Christian center.

C. THE 400 SILENT YEARS SUMMARIZED.

The Old Testament writings ended in about 400 B.C. Consequently, there were about 400 years between the Old and New Testament. Those years are commonly referred to as the 400 silent years – 400 years when God did not speak to His people. They are summarized as follows in terms of the great powers of that day and region.

1. **The Persian era.** The Persians ruled the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity of Judah (586 B.C.) until it fell to Alexander the Great (@332 B.C.). Palestine was but a tiny province. There was relative peace and prosperity.
2. **The Greek era (332-301 B.C.).** This period followed Alexander's conquests. Palestine was opened up to the Greek influence of language, culture, and philosophy. The Jews were treated well under Alexander.
3. **The Ptolemaic (Egypt) era (301-198 B.C.).** Hellenism was disseminated throughout Palestine. The Ptolemies favored the Jews. The Alexandrian Jews became rather Hellenized, while Palestine Jews remained traditional.
4. **The Seleucid (Syria) era (198-166 B.C.).** Antiochus IV enforced Hellenization and attempted to destroy the Jewish religious practices. He had a reprobate priest sacrifice a pig on the temple altar, which sparked the Maccabean wars. The revolt was led by Mattathias and his five sons. His oldest son, Judas the Maccabee, took leadership after his death.
5. **The Maccabean (Hasmonean) era (163-63 B.C.).** Palestine won independence in 143 B.C. The temple was cleansed and rededicated. The two great parties rose in Judaism: Pharisees, and Sadducees, as well as the Essenes.
6. **The Roman era (63 B.C. ---).** Rome ruled through procurators after Titus conquered Jerusalem.
7. **The Herodian era (37 B.C. – A.D. 44).** Herod the Great and his three sons ruled as Roman governors. They ruled during the life and ministry of Christ, and on into the church age. During the Roman period the major power rested in the High Priest who was in a real sense, the political leader of the Jews. Herod was nominally Jewish; however, ethnically, he was an Edomite. Herod the Great ruled (by cleverly winning the favor of Rome), from about 40-4 B.C. He built the temple in Jerusalem that Jesus knew. (Cf. Matthew chapter two.).

D. THE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE DAY. Considered here are the dominant religions of the Roman Empire, not the rest of the world.

1. **The Graeco-Roman pantheon type.** The Roman religion evolved from animism and fused with the Greek pantheon. This merger and religious form was in decline by the time of Christ, though many worshippers could be found for the many deities such as Jupiter, Zeus, Juno, Neptune, etc. An example is Artemis (Diana) of Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:27-35).
2. **Emperor worship.** The imperial cult grew out of the increasing ascription of superhuman honors and powers to the Roman emperor, and the desire to centralize the loyalty of the various peoples to him. The state and emperor were the focal point of worship.
3. **The mystery religions.** These highly experiential religions appealed to the desire for a more personal faith. In common, they all were formed around a god who died, and was resuscitated. They filled the quest for personal immortality, social equality, and personal emotional outlet.
4. **Occult worship.** These beliefs were magical and superstitious, and held that the whole world was inhabited by spirits and demons who could be cajoled into doing one's bidding, if only the correct formula or rite was employed (cf. Acts 8:9-24; 13:6-11; 19:19).
5. **Philosophies.** The result of empty ritualism or ignorant superstition is for thoughtful men to abandon religion. In an attempt to explain the universe, they resorted to philosophy, which is to organize into systematic form all existing knowledge of the universe, and to merge it with human experience. The major philosophies of that day were Platonism, Gnosticism, New-Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Cynicism, and Skepticism. (Cf. Acts 17:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; Colossians 2:8).

E. THE IMPORTANT GROUPS/INSTITUTIONS OF THE DAY.

1. **The synagogue.** This common institution, which means, "a gathering," has its origin in the Jewish homes in Babylon. They developed into formal gatherings for instruction, public worship and prayer, and took the place of temple worship after the Babylonian captivity.
2. **The Sanhedrin.** This aristocratic, native Supreme Court functioned in both civil and religious areas until the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It is thought that the Great Synagogue of the Ezra-Nehemiah period (450-400 B.B.) evolved into the 70 member Sanhedrin in about 250 B.C. High priests presided over the body. In the time of Christ, there may have been two Sanhedrins: one political, the other religious.

3. **Sects.** There were three main parties that arose during the Maccabean period that were in conflict with other: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.
4. **Scribes.** These were lawyers who copied the Holy Scriptures and thus intimately knew the Mosaic Law. They were prominent in Jesus' day.
5. **Zealots.** These were a group of Jewish insurrectionists whose objective was to overthrow the political rule of foreign powers. They were considered by some to be terrorists, as they sometimes used violence to overthrow Rome. Others considered them as freedom fighters. One of Jesus' disciples, Simon, was a Zealot (Matthew 10:4). Barabbas was probably a Zealot as he was imprisoned with insurrectionists, and also were the two men who were crucified with Christ (Mark 15:7; 27; John 18:40).⁹ They also opposed the Jewish rulers who collaborated with Rome. They championed the common people. Their last stand against Rome was taken at Masada in A.D. 73.

II. FACTORS USED TO PREPARE THE WORLD FOR CHRIST.

The Apostle, Paul, wrote, *"But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoptions of sons"* (Galatians 4:4).

Paul informed us that God has a plan for the world, and the redemption of those who believe. He has a timetable, goals, means, and all that it takes to accomplish His eternal plan. In the history of redemption, was the fact that Christ had to enter the human race, die on the cross, and rise from the dead, and take His place at the right hand of the throne of God. He used certain means in this world to facilitate that aspect of His plan. God used four factors, or controlled circumstances in world history, to prepare the world for Christ's Advent.¹⁰ I present them below.

A. THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES. The prophetic, Old Testament Scriptures pointed to a coming Messiah, or Redeemer. The Law, Prophets, and Writings, were the general divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament (cf. Luke 24:44). The Psalms were included in the Writings. These documents inform us of the coming Christ, or Messiah. They can be broken down as follows.

1. As seen in the Law of Moses. Christ was born of a woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4); the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16); of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Revelation 5:5); and a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18; Acts 3:22).
2. As seen in the Prophets. The Prophets included most of the historical books. Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22, 23); in

⁹ Ibid., pp. 96-100.

¹⁰ These notes are adapted from unpublished class notes of Dr. William F. Kerr.

Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4, 5); introduced by a prophesied forerunner (Isaiah 40:3; Luke 1:17); and as the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:3-5).

3. As seen in the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.). Christ was hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4); John 15:23-25); rejected by the rulers (Psalm 118:21-23; Matthew 21:42); Put to death by crucifixion (Psalm 22:1, 14, 15; Matthew 27:46).

B. THE PARTISAN SECTS OF JUDAISM.

1. The Pharisees. They were legalists that adapted the Law to every area of life and layered tradition upon tradition so that the tradition was more important than the Law. Worship was ritual, and their heart attitude toward God was dead (Matthew 15:1-3; Luke 11:43, 44). Legalism pointed to the need of a Savior, which was met by Christ (Luke 18:18:9-14). On the positive side, the Pharisees believed in the supernatural.
2. The Sadducees. This group was the rationalists of their day. They had great wealth, political power, were materialistic, and rationalized their faith for convenient living. They were skeptical toward religion, considered the Mosaic Law as sacred, but did not believe it literally, and discarded its application to life. They denied the future life and the supernatural (cf. Acts 23:6-9). They were unsatisfied in their heart (Matthew 22:23, 38), which pointed to the need of a Savior.
3. The Essenes. These people were the mystics, monastic, lived in communes, were vegetarians, and were governed by two ideals: peace and purity. They were pacifists. However, withdrawal from society could not save them. They still needed a Savior.

The religions did not offer hope, but the secular society of the time also illustrated the need for a Savior – something to make sense out of the chaos and hopelessness of the time.

C. THE PAGAN SECULARISM.

1. Decadence of the period. The times of the secular world were filled with violence, and decadence was spread through the land. Sin abounded: orgiastic and revolting pagan worship, degraded view of women, infidelity, adultery, homosexuality, abortion, infanticide, violence, and gluttony filled the land (Romans 1:24-28). The days cried for a Savior.
2. Pronouncements of the philosophers. The philosophers were desperate for salvation, distraught with the world; many were fed up with religion. For example, the Epicureans pursued happiness as the chief end of this life, with the highest pleasure (tranquility and freedom from fear) being

obtained by knowledge, friendship, and living a virtuous and temperate life.

They were materialists, and mounted sustained attacks against religion and superstition. The philosophers were ardent in explaining the universe in a rational way in a context of religiousness that did not satisfy the human mind or heart. In the end, however, they too were without hope.

The need for a Savior was evident, but that was not the only thing God used to prepare the world for the Messiah. We see His preparations below.

D. THE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE WORLD.

1. Roman law and transportation. The contribution of Rome was law. With it they ruled and established the civilized world in a context of order and peace. This was the necessary soil for the gospel to be planted and nourished. It offered a greater degree of protection to the evangelists (cf. Acts 25:8-12; 16:35-39). Their extensive highway system facilitated transportation. There were five major highways that extended out from Rome to the borders of the Empire.
2. Greek language. Greek was the common language of the Empire. The Septuagint was the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek. Consequently, the Scriptures were available to all in the Empire.
3. Hebrew legacy. The Hebrews believed in one God, had synagogues in every major town, which were the public places of worship, and became centers for early Christian preaching (Acts 13:13-49). A Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was the Bible of the Jews of the Diaspora. The Jews had a strong faith in God, the future life, worship, and prayer. They were monotheists, believing in the one true God as opposed to many gods. They offered a vital alternative to bankrupt paganism and secularism.

Part of the Hebrew legacy was the Diaspora. This was the scattering of the Jews over the world starting from the Babylonian captivity. They, with their national identity, synagogue, and Scripture were as far away as China and India.

4. The competent historian, Angus, said in his *Environment of Early Christianity*, "Christ appeared at the time when all the striving and hopes of all peoples were converging to a focus, when the vast majority of mankind were hungering for religious support, when East and West had been wedded, when men were expecting a new era, when the philosophy of Greece and the religious consciousness of the Hebrew were pointing toward a new Revelation. Christ came at the one time in history when all civilized lived, as it were, under one roof, when the happiness of mankind depended on the will of one, when all were able to communicate in one language, when men were unanimous as to the perils and needs of the world, when there was peace on

earth, when there was 'one empire, one universal language, one civilization, a common development toward monotheism, and a common yearning for saviours.'"¹¹

Now that we see how God had prepared the world for the coming of Christ, we can discover how Jesus Christ was manifested in the world as the Messiah and Savior. I will do this in a threefold manner: first, to see how Christ was presented in the Old Testament and the Gospels, examine the person of Christ, and summarize the most important work of Christ, namely, His death, burial, and resurrection. Finally, I give an outline of the life of Christ. Keep reading. This is very important stuff.

An overview of Jesus Christ: Messiah, Savior, Lord

I. AN OVERVIEW OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS & OLD TESTAMENT

A. CHRIST IS KEY TO THE BIBLE. Jesus Christ is seen in both the Old and New Testament. He is pictured as the perfect prophet, priest, and king for a lost and needy humanity. These roles fulfill the basic needs of humanity.

1. Christ's coming was **anticipated** as coming in the Old Testament
 - His coming was necessary because:
Humanity was sinful – thus, the need for a priest
Humanity was ignorant – thus, the need for a prophet
Humanity was anarchistic – thus, the need for a King
 - His coming was prepared by being:
Prophesied in the prophets as the ideal prophet
Typified in the ceremonies as the ideal priest.
Magnified in the promises as the ideal king
Unfolded in history through the nation Israel, the line of Judah
2. Christ's coming was **realized** in the four Gospels
 - Christ is exhibited as the perfect prophet who speaks the word in truth.
 - Christ is exhibited as the ideal priest who offers the one perfect sacrifice for sin.
 - Christ is exhibited as the ideal king to lead humanity.
3. Christ's coming was **explained** in Acts – Revelation
 - He is the provision of redemption: He meets human need of redemption and priest in His sacrifice.
 - He is the provision of information: He meets the human need of a prophet in the messages of the epistles.

¹¹ Angus, Samuel. *The Environment of Early Christianity*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919, p. 222.

- He is the provision of leadership: He meets the human desire and need for a king by the incoming kingdom disclosed in Revelation.

B. CHRIST IS REVEALED IN THE GOSPELS

The Gospels give a four-fold picture of Jesus Christ, and these views of Christ show how He meets four major need of humanity.

1. **Political.** The Jews were looking for a political savior; thus, Christ is pictured in Matthew as the Messiah, the King, the One who would restore the political fortunes of Israel and bring in the Kingdom Age (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 27:37).
2. **Governmental.** Mark points his Gospel to the Romans who were the men of good government, and those who accomplished great deeds through leaders. To them, Jesus is pictured as the Servant of the Most High who did great miracles and deeds. (Zechariah 3:8; Isaiah 42:1; Mark 10:45).
3. **Intellectual.** Luke appealed to the Greeks who sought wisdom and the arts. Jesus is pictured as the perfect man. Luke wrote in a scholarly form (Zechariah 6:12; Luke 19:10).
4. **Spiritual.** John displays Christ as God, the One through whom the world could experience the fulfillment of its spiritual needs (Isaiah 9:6: 40:9; John 20:30, 31).

C. THE OLD TESTAMENT SAW THE FOUR FOLD PRESENTATION.

Just as the Gospels, the Old Testament pictured Christ in the same fourfold manner as do the Gospels. The Church fathers also saw the same view. This presentation is seen in the faces of the cherubim, and described in Ezekiel 1:1-14 (cf. 10: 1-22). Cherubim are an order of angels who seem to be given the task of guarding the holiness of God. They guarded the route to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24), and a representation of them was attached to the Mercy Seat of the Ark (Exodus 25:18-22). We are told that Satan was once a cherub (Ezekiel 28:14, 16).

1. One cherub has the face of a lion. Jesus is pictured as the lion of the tribe of Judah – the **King** (Genesis 49:9; Revelation 5:5; Hebrews 7:14).
2. One had the face of an ox. Christ is seen as the ox, speaking of service and sacrifice – the **Servant**. (Zechariah 3:8; Isaiah 42:1; Mark 10:45).
3. One had the face of a man. Christ is presented as the man – speaking of the Son of **Man**. (Zechariah 6:12; Luke 19:10).
4. One had the face of an eagle. Christ is displayed as the eagle, the bird that flies beyond the clouds into the sun – the **Son of God**. (Isaiah 9:6: 40:9; John 20:30, 31; Matthew 4:3, 6).

D. THE OLD TESTAMENT BRANCH.

Another way the Old Testament pictures Christ is in the role as King, Servant, Man, and God can be seen in the two special phrases: “branch,” and special announcements introduced by the word “behold.”

1. The Branch
 - The Branch as the King (Jeremiah 23:5).
 - The Branch as the Servant (Zechariah 9:9)
 - The Branch as the Son of Man (Zachariah 6:12).
 - The Branch as the Son of God (Isaiah 4:2).

2. The phrase behold.
 - Behold thy King (Zechariah 9:9).
 - Behold thy Servant (Isaiah 42:1).
 - Behold thy Man (Zechariah 6:12).
 - Behold thy God (Isaiah 40:9).

Who, then, is Jesus Christ? He is important, in fact, the most important Person in the entire universe, who accomplished the most important deed in the universe. Let's look in more detail, since He is the dominant person in the Gospels.

II. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

The Gospels teach that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is God. He is presented as being fully God, co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father, and sharing fully and simultaneously in one common nature with God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus took upon Himself human flesh through a virgin birth and was also fully human. Consequently, Christ is the God-man, though with only one personality. He is the second Person of the Trinity. Following is a short summary of three aspects of His Person: His Deity, His humanity, and His character.

A. THE DIETY OF CHRIST (John 1:1).

1. Proved by His works and qualities of deity.
 - He is omnipotent (Philippians 3:21)
 - He is omnipresent (Matthew 18:20)
 - He is omniscient (John 1:48)
 - He is unchangeable (Hebrews 13:8)
 - He is life (John 1:4)
 - He is truth (John 16:6)
 - He preformed miracles: power over nature, sickness, death, and life. He walked on water, healed the blind and handicapped, turned water to wine, raised others and Himself from the dead.

2. Proved by His personal claims.
 - He claimed to be God (John 10:30)
 - He never denied being God (e.g. John 20:28,29)
 - He claimed eternal existence (John 8:58)
 - Others understood Him to make claim of deity (e.g. John 10:33)

3. Proved by His relationships
 - He accepted worship.
 - He demanded worship (John 5:23; 20:28,29)
 - He was called God by titles (Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8)
 - He is related equally to the Father in the Trinity (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

B. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST (John 1:14)

1. His uniqueness
 - He had a supernatural birth (Luke 1:34,35)
 - He was sinless and perfect (2 Corinthians 5:21)
 - He veiled His glory (John 17:5).
 - He limited His Divine attributes (Philippians 2:7)
 - He had two separate, complete natures united into one Person: fully God, and fully man.
2. His likeness to humanity
 - He had a body, soul, and spirit (John 2:2; 12:27; Luke 23:46).
 - He was called a man (1 Timothy 2:5).
 - He developed, had physical needs, and lived as a man (Luke 2:40, 52; John 19:28; 4:7, 9).
 - He had emotions of man: anger, humor, love, contentment, grief, temptation, joy, lonely.
3. His purpose: why did God become flesh?
 - He came to reveal God (John 1:18)
 - He came to set an example (1 Peter 2:21)
 - He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)
 - He came to become the merciful high priest (Hebrews 10:1-10).
 - He came to fulfill the Davidic Covenant as the Messiah (Matthew 1:1; 2:1-11; Luke 1:31-33)
 - He came to be highly exalted (Philippians 2:9)
 - He came to be a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:1-10).

C. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST (John 1:14)

1. Displayed Godward
 - He was holy (Acts 4:27)
 - He was prayerful (Mark 1:35)
 - He had faith (John chapter 17; 11:40-42)
 - He knew the Bible (Matthew 4:7).
 - He was obedient (Philippians 2:8)
2. Displayed inward
 - He was humble (John 8:50)
 - He had self control, was gentle (John 20:29)

- He was a careful, hard worker (John 5:17)
 - He was persistent (Hebrews 12:2)
3. Displayed otherward
- He is compassionate (Mark 1:40, 41)
 - He is patient (Romans 9:22)
 - He is gracious: free granting of kindness (John 9:1-11)
 - He is forgiving (Luke 23:33, 34)
 - He has integrity, honesty (John 14:2)

Now that I have described a bit about the Person of Christ, we need to summarize the most important event in course of human history. It was accomplished by Christ. It deals with the hopeless human condition.

III. SUMMARY: THE DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The central story of the Bible is that of the redemption of humanity ultimately to the glory of God. The central event of redemption is the work of Christ: His substitutionary, sacrificial death, His burial, His literal and bodily resurrection from the dead, and ascension into Heaven to take His place at the right hand of God the Father. This is the event upon which Christianity rests (1 Corinthians 15:1-19). Consequently, the following outline displays the central events surrounding that event. It is also recognized that the sequence of events in some cases is open to question, as the biblical data is unclear.

A short summary of His life as presented in the Gospels starts with His birth from a virgin named Mary. The Holy Spirit started the process in Mary's womb. He grew up a normal life, and then went into ministry at about the age of 30. He was introduced by John the Baptist, and proclaimed Himself as the Messiah to the Jews. He gained a following, trained a select few, but was violently rejected by official Judaism.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas, led through several trials, and finally handed over to the Roman rulers to be executed by crucifixion. He died, was buried, but rose from the dead on the third day. After about 40 days of continued ministry on earth among His followers, He ascended into heaven, from which He will someday return to earth. With this brief summary in mind, let's pick up with the trials of Jesus following His betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

A. THE TRIALS OF JESUS.

1. First trial. Before Annas: the decision to kill Jesus (John 18:12-14). Annas was the high priest from A.D. 7-14, but was replaced by the Romans with Caiaphas who was Annas' son-in-law, and who served until A.D. 37. To the Jews, however, the appointment was for life, and that was the reason they took Jesus first to Annas. Caiaphas had the power to carry out any decision.

2. Second trial. This was before Caiaphas. The death sentence was pronounced on the basis of blasphemy (Matthew 26:57-68). Jesus did not deny the charge of Deity, and/or being the Messiah (cf. John 18:33-39: 19:7-12).
3. Third trial. This was before the Sanhedrins. Here the death sentence was made legal (Matthew 27:1, 2). According to Jewish law, the first two trials were illegal, because they were held at night.
4. Fourth trial. Here Jesus was placed before Pilate, and found innocent based on the evidence (Luke 23:6-15). Pilate was the appointed Roman governor of Judea. He was in charge of the Roman troops in the area, collected taxes, and possessed the authority connected with capital punishment.
5. Fifth trial. Pilate passed the case onto Herod, since it was in his jurisdiction. Pilate wanted to placate the Jews. (Luke 23:6-15). Jesus was found by Herod to be innocent of the charges.
6. Sixth trial. Jesus was sent back to Pilate, who again found Him innocent, but sentenced Jesus to death out of political expedience (Luke 23:13-25; cf. John 18:28-19:16). Later, tradition has it that Pilate committed suicide after being banned to exile by Caligula for a massacre of Samaritans, according to the church historian, Eusebius in Book 2, chapter 8 of his church history. Vengeance from God came swift, within about 10 years of Christ's crucifixion.

B. FIFTEEN EVENTS OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

1. The executioners with Jesus traveled to Mt. Calvary (Golgotha) (Matthew 27:33).
2. They offered drugged vinegar to Jesus, which He refused (Matthew 27:34).
3. They crucified Jesus with two thieves (Matthew 27:35-38).
4. Jesus' statement one, "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34).
5. The soldiers cast lots for Christ's garments (Matthew 27:35).
6. The Jews mocked Jesus (Mark 15:29).
7. The thieves mocked Jesus, but later one believes, and was saved (Luke 23:39-43).
8. Jesus' statement two, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).
9. Jesus' statement three, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19:26, 27).
10. The three hours of darkness (Matthew 27:45).
11. Jesus' statement four, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, 47).
12. Jesus' statement five, "I thirst" (John 19:28).
13. Jesus' statement six, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

14. Jesus' statement seven, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke 23:46).
15. Christ dismisses His spirit (Matthew 27:50).

C. THE EVENTS OF THE RESURRECTION.

1. Mary, the mother of James and Joses (and wife of Clopas, Mathew 28:1, Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10), Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Salome with other women go to the tomb (Luke 23:55-24:1; Mark15:40; Matthew 27:55, 56).
2. The women discover the stone rolled away (Luke 24:2-9).
3. Mary Magdalene runs to inform the disciples (John 20:1, 2).
4. Mary, the mother of James, approaches the tomb and sees the angel (Matthew 28:1, 2).
5. This woman hurries back to meet the other women coming with spices.
6. Peter and John approach the tomb see inside and leave (John 20:3-10).
7. Crying, Mary Magdalene returns, observes two angels and Jesus (John 20:11-18).
8. Christ instructs Mary to go inform the disciples (John 20:17, 18).
9. Mary, the mother of James, comes back with the women (Luke 24:1-4).
10. They arrive and see the two angels (Luke 24:5).
11. In addition they listen to the angel's message (Matthew 28:6-8).
12. Scampering away to locate the disciples, they are visited by Christ (Matthew 29:9, 10).

D. THE POST RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF CHRIST.

1. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18).
2. To the women going from the tomb to find the disciples (Matthew 28:8-10).
3. To Peter on the day of resurrection (Luke 24:34).
4. To the disciples traveling to Emmaus in the evening (Luke 24:13-31).
5. To the disciples, excluding Thomas (John 20:19-24).
6. To the disciples one week later, but with Thomas present (John 20:24-29).
7. In Galilee to the seven at Lake Tiberias (John21:1-23).
8. On a hill in Galilee: the disciples and 500 believers (1 Corinthians 15:6)
9. At Jerusalem and Bethany to James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
10. At Mt. Olivet at Christ's Ascension (Acts 1:3-12).
11. To Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 1:3-12).
12. To Stephen outside the walls of Jerusalem (Acts 7:55).
13. To Paul in the Temple (Acts 22:17-21; 23:11).
14. To John while in exile on the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1:10-19).

E. THE PROOFS OF THE CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1. The fact of the open tomb (John 20:1, 2).
2. The fact of the discovery of the grave clothes (John 20:5-7).
3. Christ's appearances to over 500 people during His post-resurrection stay on earth of 40 days (Acts 1:4).
4. The sealing and guarding of His tomb (Matthew 27:62, 66).
5. The removal of the sealed stone by an angel (Matthew 28:1-3).

6. The stark fright of the Roman guards (Matthew 28:4).
7. The angel's message to the women (Matthew 28:5-6).
8. The guard's report to the chief priests (Matthew 28:11).
9. The priest's bribe to the Roman guards (Matthew 28:12, 13).
10. The circulation of the lie that Christ's body was stolen (Matthew 28:15).
11. The fact of Christ's death (John 19:34-42).
12. The fact of Christ's burial (Mark 15:42-47).
13. The fact His body was not stolen. Two points flow from this observation, as seen in number 14 and 15 below.
14. His enemies did not steal Christ's body, or they would have produced it to disprove the resurrection. They had no motive to steal the body. In fact, they did all they could to keep in the tomb.
15. Christ's friends did not steal the body for this reason: they would not be willing to risk and give their life for what they knew to be a lie!
16. The fact the resurrection was not a hallucination. There were many personal eye witnesses: doubting Thomas, 500 people at one time. Some touched and handled Him. They recognized His voice. He ate food in the presence of some.
17. The fact the whole event was not a hoax. One must consider the changed lives of the disciples, the conversion of many priests (Acts 6:7). Peter preached the first Christian evangelistic sermon, and the central theme was the resurrection of Christ. If it would have been a hoax, then people would have laughed at Peter, but about 3,000 believed on Christ, and the numbers mushroomed from that point.
18. Christ predicted His death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 9:30-32).
19. The Old Testament predicts His death, burial and resurrection (Psalm 16:8-11).
20. The fact of the historical existence of the Christian church that stems unstoppable from that one, central, single, core truth: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian church is the largest institution the world has ever known. The central belief (Christ has risen) is believed by over two billion people.
21. The spectacular conversion of Paul, who was a fierce opponent of Christianity.
22. The careful consideration by great scholars. For example, consider Simon Greenleaf, the great Royale Professor of Law at Harvard. He was the man who caused Harvard Law School to rise to its preeminence in the world. Many call him the greatest authority on legal evidences in the history of the world. His conclusion about the resurrection of Christ in light of all the laws of evidence was that Christ's resurrection was a reality, a historical event, and anyone who honestly examined the evidence would be convinced of its fact.¹² Even the great philosopher, John Locke, believed the resurrection of Christ to be true.¹³

¹² Cited by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), pp. 217, 218).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

23. The fact of the Lord's Day with faithful Jews switching to Sunday (Acts 20:7).
24. The fact of Easter with Jews switching from Passover to Easter.
25. The existence of Christian art and hymnity.
26. The testimony of Josephus, who was a first century Jewish historian writing to please the Romans. He considered the resurrection of Christ as a factual, historical event.¹⁴

His testimony is important, because it comes from a non-Christian source, and from an accepted and respected expert secular historian of the day. I give the quote here, "Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

I recognize that this quote is disputed by those who do not want to believe in Jesus Christ and His resurrection. They want to convince us that Christianity and the stories of the Gospels are simply myths made up by later Christians. However, Josephus was not a Christian, but a secular historian standing outside of the Christian Faith, and in fact was a Jew on friendly terms with the Romans. Josephus' historical record and this quote in particular, are genuine and accurate.

F. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1. It establishes the righteousness of Christ (John 16:10).
2. It certifies the Deity of Christ (Acts 2:36; Romans 1:4).
3. It validates the efficacy of His death (John 10:17, 18; 11:25; Romans 5:10; 8:35). His death accomplished what it was supposed to do: pay the penalty of sin.
4. It makes possible our salvation (Matthew 1:21; Romans 4:25; John 11:25). The penalty of sin was paid, and eternal life can now be granted, and we are reconciled to God, but only through Christ and His work.

G. THE RESURRECTION AS RELATED TO CHRIST'S UNIQUE WORK.

1. It allowed Him to send the Holy Spirit (John 16:10).
2. It was necessary to the founding of His church and headship of creation (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9).

¹⁴ Found in his *Antiquities*, 18.3.3, and Cited by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson publishers, 1999), p. 213.

3. It establishes His intercessory and advocacy work (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25).
4. It is the ground for His granting of gifted men to the church (Ephesians 4:8-13).
5. It guarantees the resurrection of all believers (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Philippians 3:20).

H. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTED BODY.

1. It was a real, genuine body as seen by the nail prints and His eating of food, plus the fact of His side wound (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; John 20:25-29; Luke 24:39-43).
2. It was clearly an identifiable body as seen by His voice being recognized (John 20:16), and His way of breaking bread (Luke 24:13-25).
3. It was a glorified body as Christ could go through doors (Luke 24:36; John 20:19), appear and disappear at will (Luke 24:15; John 20:19), and He appeared at God's right hand (Acts 7:56; 9:3-6).

IV. THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN OUTLINE FORM.

A. THE PREPARATION OF CHRIST. (From His birth, @B.C. 5; to the beginning of His public ministry @A.D. 27. The exact dates are uncertain). In His genealogy, Christ is seen as descending from David, through Solomon to Joseph so as to be the legal heir to the throne of David. His line also descended from David through his other son, Nathan, down through Mary; thus, Christ was the physical descendant of David, Abraham, and Adam.

Little is told of Christ's childhood. Recorded are the visit of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, visit of angels and wise men, flight to Egypt. We are told that Jesus grew in strength, wisdom, stature and favor with both men and God (Luke 2:40, 52). His early life is summarized as:

1. His infancy
2. His childhood
3. His youth
4. His young manhood

B. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

The dates run from about A.D. 27, which was at His public appearance in Jerusalem at the first Passover to His final return to Jerusalem to die at the Passover in A.D. 30).

1. **The preliminary ministry.** This covers all parts of Palestine. It goes from His first public appearance in Jerusalem (Passover A.D. 27) to His settlement in Capernaum six or eight months later.
2. **Christ was announced** by John the Baptist as the promised Messiah, was baptized, underwent temptation by Satan, and entered into public ministry for a duration of about three years.
 - In Judea
 - In Samaria

- In Galilee
- His removal to Capernaum (Matthew 4:12-16).

3. **The Settled ministry in Galilee.**

The first period, or the earlier Galilean ministry (4-6 months), lasted from the settlement in Galilee to the second Passover, or feast of Purim (John 5:1).

The second period, or the later Galilean ministry (one year), lasted from the second Passover, April A.D. 28 to the third Passover, April, A.D. 29 (John 6:4).

C. THE SPECIALIZED MINISTRY (Special training of the Twelve). This took place in foreign parts mostly outside Galilee. It was from about April A.D. 29 to the final departure from Galilee, (October A.D. 29). The time span was about six months from the Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles. His ministry was:

1. In Capernaum and Phoenicia
2. In Decapolis
3. In Dalmanutha (Madagan)
4. Near Bethsaida
5. Near Caesarea – Philippi
6. Through Galilee
7. In Capernaum
8. Final departure from Galilee. The Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2).

D. THE CONCLUDING MINISTRY.

This phase involved controversies in Jerusalem, and evangelizing in Judea and Perea. It was from the Feast of Tabernacles, October A.D. 29 to the Feast of the Passover, April A.D. 30).

1. From Galilee to Judea: the later Judean ministry.
2. From Judea to Perea: the later Perea ministry.
3. From Perea to Bethan: conflict with Jewish rulers through the raising of Lazarus (John 11).
4. From Bethany to Ephraim: retirement in Ephraim (John 11:54).
5. From Ephraim to Bethany: evangelizing on His final return to Jerusalem.

E. THE CONSUMMATION.

This phase was from Palm Sunday to Pentecost, 47 days in the spring of A.D. 30. The fourth Passover was possible in John 11:55.

1. Conflicts and warnings.
 - The final controversies and warning
 - The final departure
2. Sufferings and death
 - Preparation for His death by Jewish rulers, and also by Jesus
3. Events leading to His death.
 - Betrayal and arrest
 - Trials and crucifixion

- Death and burial
- 4. Triumph and Glory: 40 days.
 - The resurrection and appearances (forty days)
 - The final commission and ascension

The work of Christ involved teaching and works of power to certify His Person and message (John 20:30, 31). He offered Himself as Messiah to the Jews (Matthew 27:11, 29, 37), was rejected by His own (John 1:11; 19:14, 15), was crucified, rose from the dead and lived among His disciples for 40 days. He commanded them to preach the gospel throughout the entire world while establishing His church as they went. Then, Christ ascended to Heaven (John 19-21; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:1-11).

We have now examined some introductory matters regarding the Gospels. Specifically we have studied four basic broad areas: the nature of the Gospels, some critical issues, the cultural and historical context, and an overview of Jesus Christ. Under the background issues, we noted the characteristics, number and development of the Gospel accounts. Under the critical issues, we explored the canonicity, synoptic problem, and form criticism. Regarding the cultural context, we gave a brief scanning of the political and cultural issues, and then brought into focus the factors that God used to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world of humanity.

Finally, I presented an overview of Christ in his relationship with the Gospels and Old Testament, examined the Person of Jesus, summarized the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and finally, portrayed the life of Christ in outline form.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW A BACKGROUND, OUTLINE, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

BRIEF CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF MATHEW.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT OF MATTHEW

In this examination of the Gospel of Matthew, my objective is to give a summary of background and introductory issues, some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. I will then give an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

A. **THE GOSPEL.** The Gospel of Matthew bridges the gap between the Old and New Testament and is thought by some to have been the first Gospel written, though others suggest Mark as being the first. The Gospel was written for the Jew and presents Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, the King.

B. **THE WRITER.** The Apostle Matthew is the writer, according to the early Church Fathers and internal evidence, though there are no direct claims from internal biblical sources. Matthew was a Hebrew who knew the Old Testament very well, was a tax-gatherer, somewhat wealthy, and an astute theologian. He preached 15 years in Palestine and then went to the Ethiopians, Macedonians, Syrians and Persians.

C. **THE DATE.** The date of writing was around A.D. 50-70.

D. **LANGUAGE.** The original languages: perhaps written first in Aramaic, and later translated into Greek by Matthew because of popular demand. This belief, however, is not certain.

E. **THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE.** We ask, why did Matthew write his Gospel? What was the purpose? What was the main thrust? In answer, the theological purpose involves four questions that are asked and answered.

1. Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of the Old Testament? The answer is yes (see Matthew 2:2; 21:5; 27: 11, 29, 37; cf. John 19:14, 15).
2. Why did Jesus fail to bring in the promised messianic kingdom? He was rejected by Israel (see John 19: 14, 15).
3. Will that kingdom ever be in place? The answer is yes, but in the future (see Matthew 24:3, 29-31, 36).
4. What is God's purpose today, or in the meantime? The answer is to build His Church, which is an interim program inserted in history between the

Old Testament and yet future messianic kingdom (see Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20).

F. MAJOR INFORMATION. There are two major categories of information as indicated in Christ's two names: "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*" (Matthew 1:1).

1. The son of David refers to the messianic King and His kingdom: He is related to the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16), which concerns Israel.
2. The son of Abraham refers to the whole world, including the church. Reference is being made to the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) which concerns blessings and benefits the whole world, as well as Israel.

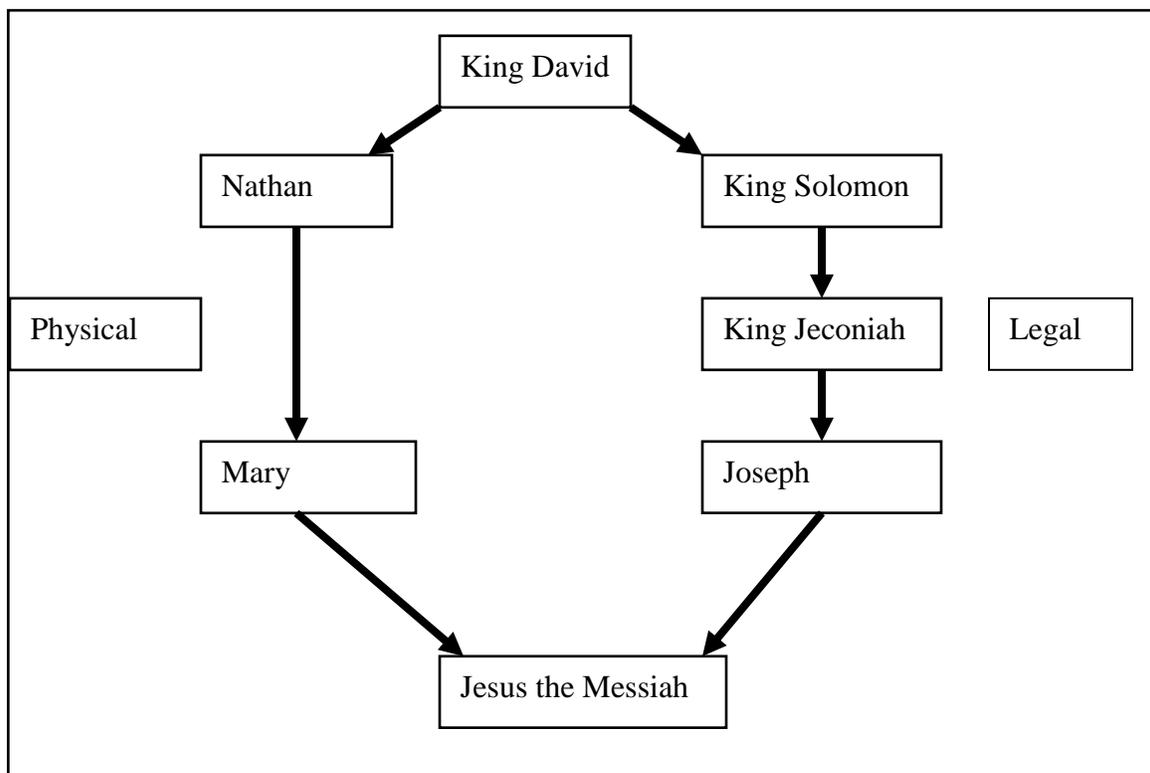
II. NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS.

Before we examine in more detail the content of Matthew, it is helpful to bring to our attention several matters to help fill out the context of the gospel.

A. GENEALOGY. The first thing mentioned: Christ's genealogy.

1. As the book was written to the Jew, the legal right of Christ's kingship must be established before any other claim will be heard. His legal right to the throne of David is first displayed as coming from Abraham through David to Joseph, the legal father of Christ.
2. Abraham was given the promise of a land to be inhabited by a nation descended from him (Genesis 12:1-3), and David was promised an eternal throne upon which his son should rule that nation in that land (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Following the Babylonian captivity of Israel and Judah, no king of Israel has sat on the throne of David. The promise did not, however, guarantee uninterrupted dominion, but only the eternal right to rule. Christ now rules from heaven. Upon His second advent, He will assume His rightful place on the throne of David (Matthew 25: 31).
3. An apparent problem arises regarding Jesus' right to rule on the throne of David as the messianic king. The problem has to do with the statement by Jeremiah (22:30) concerning King Jeconiah (Matthew 1:11): "*Thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*" The question comes, how can Christ rule as the Messianic king since a curse was placed on the line? Several things can be noted:
 - Jeremiah's statement referred to the physical occupation and blessing while actually on the throne. And true to his word, no physical descendant of King Jeconiah ever has occupied the throne of David since the curse. Thus, the prediction by Jeremiah is true.
 - The legal line of ruler ship did descend through Jeconiah and his offspring down to Jesus.

- However, Jesus was not a physical descendant of Jeconiah so as to receive the curse, but He was the legal descendant through King Jeconiah back to David, and could legally receive the right to rule as King through the dynasty of David.
- Furthermore, Jesus was a physical descendant of David through another son, Nathan (Luke 3:31), which was through Mary's lineage (Mt. 1:16).
- Consequently, Jesus traces His right of legal succession to the throne of Israel through Joseph, and His physical connection to David through Mary. The following diagram illustrates the concept.



The genealogy did not list every individual in the line, which was not required by Jewish reckoning.

B. AUTHORITY OF CHRIST. As the king, Jesus possesses great authority saying, for example, *"Ye have heard that it hath been said of old time...but I say unto you"* (5:21, 22). He assumed authority above their law. His word is supreme authority. Again, Jesus said: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"* (Matthew 28:18).

C. **EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY**. Jesus exercises and displays full authority (Matthew 28:18) when He pronounces woe upon those who reject His claims (Matthew 23:1-36). As we proceed further into the details of Matthew's Gospel, we observe more displays of power and authority.

D. **THE KEYNOTE**. The keynote of Matthew is the "Kingdom of Heaven." This expression occurs over 32 times in this Gospel, but nowhere else in the New Testament. It means the rule of the heavens over the earth in the hands of Jesus who is the son of David, and absolutely under the control of heaven. The Jews were looking for this Messianic Kingdom to be established on earth. A Jewish authority writes:

One of the most enduring and pervasive beliefs in the Jewish religion has been the doctrine of the Messiah...The Jewish concept of a Messiah as a human, God elected Redeemer for Israel--and, coincidentally, for all of mankind through the intermediation of Israel...It pictures him as God's Messenger--the human instrumentality of the Divine Will--who will, at the appointed hour, be sent by God to redeem Israel from its overlong martyrdom of suffering, humiliation, and oppression...The predetermined mission of the Messiah was definitive and clear: the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth...when brotherhood, peace, and justice would usher in the eternal Sabbath for Israel, and for the rest of mankind as well, provided it accepted the belief in One God and his Torah.¹⁵

John the Baptist announced the presence of this kingdom (Matthew 3:2, 3). The Jews, however, rejected this kingdom with Jesus as Messiah, and it has been delayed until the second coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31). The nature of this kingdom today is explained in the parables of Matt. 13 (See John 19:14, 15: Matthew 21: 5, 9 27:11, 29, 37).

E. **THE KINGDOM**. The kingdom was present from Matthew 3:2 and John's announcement until the rejection of the King in Matthew 12:1-45 (Note verse 14), and the proclamation of a new brotherhood (Matthew 12:46-50). Note the contrast of Christ's first commission in which His disciples were to go only to the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-7) against the Great Commission in which the disciples were to go into all the world to all the ethnic groups (Matthew 28:18-20). (See Matthew, chapter 28 and note D).

F. **KING OF THE JEWS**. In Matthew we are told Jesus was born King of the Jews (Matthew 27:11, 22); in Luke it reads "born a Savior." In Matthew He was crucified because He said He was the King of the Jews; in John He said He was the Son of God.

G. **THE BROAD SWEEP OF MATTHEW.**

1. Preparation of the King (1:18).

¹⁵ Nathan Ausubel, *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1964), pp. 280-81

2. Announcement of the King (3:2, 3).
3. Commencement of the King (4:17).
4. Proclamation of the Kingdom (10:5-7) Jews only.
5. Rejection of the King (11:20; 12:14).
6. Shift from Messianic Kingdom to whole world (12:50).
 - Interim program announced (13:11).
 - Church predicted, announced (16:13).
7. Future Messianic Kingdom promised (25:31).
8. Assassination of the King (27:11, 22).
9. Commissioning of interim program (28:18-20).
10. Institution of interim program (Acts 2)
 - To Jews - (Acts 2:14; chapter 10).
 - To Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

H. AN OUTLINE OF THE GOSPELS.

1. Period of Preparation.
 - John's birth.
 - Christ's birth, childhood until 12 years old.
 - The King announced, tested, approved.
2. Period of Beginning Messianic labor.
 - Jerusalem leaders offended.
 - Welcome in Galilee.
3. Year of Great Public Favor (Matthew 4-7; Luke 6).
4. Crucial Rejection by Israel (Matthew 15; Mark 7; John 6).
5. Facing the Cross -- from Galilee.
6. His Sacrifice.
7. His Resurrection and Commission.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF MATTHEW.

I. THE PREPARATION OF THE KING (1:1-4:16).

- A. The genealogy of the King (1:1-17).
- B. The birth of the King (1:18-2:23).
- C. The baptism of the King (3:1-17).
- D. The temptation of the King (4:1-11).

II. THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE KING (4:12-16:20).

- A. His preaching started (4:12-17).
- B. His message, workers, method (4:17-25).
- C. His kingdom teaching: Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7).
- D. His power demonstrated (Chapters 8-9).
- E. His kingdom proclaimed by His disciples (Chapter 10).
- F. His kingdom program rejected (Chapter 11).
- G. His altered Program (Chapter 12).
- H. His present mystery kingdom on earth -- parables (Chapter 13).
- I. His Further Rejection as Messiah (13: 53-16: 12).
- J. His Revelation of the Church (16: 13-20).

III. THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF THE KING (16:21-27:66).

- A. The momentum against the King (16: 21-25:46).
 - 1. Predictions of His suffering, death and resurrection (16:21-28).
 - 2. Transfiguration of Christ (17:1-13).
 - 3. Miracles and teaching (17: 14-20-20:34).
 - 4. Triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem (21:18-22:14).
 - 5. Nation of Israel rejected, in parable form (21:18-22:14).
 - 6. Attempted entrapment of Christ (22:15-46).
 - 7. Judgment on scribes, Pharisees, Jerusalem (Chapter 23).
 - 8. Signs of the second coming of Christ (Chapters 24-25).
- B. The sacrifice of the King (Chapters 26-27).
 - 1. The Passover (26:1-35).
 - 2. The garden of Gethsemane (26:36-46).
 - 3. The betrayal by Judas (26:47-56).
 - 4. The trial (26:57-27:10).
 - 5. The presentation before Pilate (27:11-260).
 - 6. The crucifixion, death, burial (27:27-66).

IV. THE CONQUEST OF THE KING (Chapter 28).

- A. His resurrection (28:1-15).
- B. His Great Commission (28:16-20).

Special comments:

- C. The Trinity.
- D. The Kingdom of Heaven.
- E. The money changers.
- F. The church and state.
- G. Marriage, divorce, remarriage.
- H. Miracles.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS

I. THE PREPARATION OF THE KING (1:1-4:16).

A. THE DESCENT OF THE KING (1:1-17).

1. The first verse states, *“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”* Jesus Christ is the Son of David, which is the Christ (Messiah) of prophecy. The name **“Jesus”** is a transliteration from the Greek *“iesous,”* which in turn is a transliteration of the Hebrew name *“Jeshua,”* or *“Joshua.”* Joshua means the Lord is salvation, or Jehovah is salvation, or, the savior. The name, Jesus, was given to the Son of God as His personal name by His mother in obedience to instructions from an angel of the Lord (Matthew 1:21). The name has powerful divine implications, as the angel revealed that Jesus would *“save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). Only God can forgive sin.
2. The second thing we learn from verse one deals with the title, **“Christ.”** Christ comes from the Greek word, *“christos”* (anointed), which translates the Hebrew *“Meshiah”* (Messiah), which means the *“anointed one”*. The

- title was applied to Old Testament priests (e.g. Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16), the prophets (e.g. Psalm 105:15), and sometimes the king of Israel (e.g. 1 Samuel 2:10, 35; 2 Samuel 1:14; Psalm 2:2; 18:50). The word is even used regarding Cyrus, the king of Persia (Isaiah 45:1).
3. Sometimes the word is used as a personal name, but it is also a title as indicated with its often use with the article, thus becoming “The Christ” like, “The King.” In this usage it carries the force of the promised Christ (Messiah) from God. He becomes the One who fulfills the concept of Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus accepted the title, *“and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day’”* (Luke 24:46; cf. Matthew 26: 63-68).
 4. Jesus was given further identification by Matthew when he referred to Jesus as the “son of David” (1:1). This was a very popular title for the Messiah. Jesus was identified as one qualified to rule on the throne of David through the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalms 89:1-4, 19-37; 132:11-18), which is a yet future event (19:28). In other words, Jesus would fulfill a **political purpose**, which the Jews were anticipating through their Messiah, of which they are still waiting. Jesus identified Himself as the Messianic King of the Jews, who will someday restore the Davidic Kingdom (Acts 1:6, 7; Matthew 19:28; 24:3, 29-31; 25:31; 26:63-68; 27:11, 17, 22, 29, 37, 42; John 18:33-37).
 5. But, Jesus was also identified as the son of Abraham, which emphasizes **spiritual purposes** and blessing (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 21:12, 13). However, God also spoke to the political aspect of Israel, as well as the spiritual benefit to the entire world. The Abrahamic Covenant states, *“And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:2, 3). Isaiah also spoke of the “suffering servant” where Christ’s sacrifice would atone for sin (Isaiah 53:1-12). The Jews saw only the political aspect of Messiah, and not the spiritual sacrifice for sin.

B. THE BIRTH OF THE KING.

1. Jesus was born of a virgin woman, Mary. This event was according to a previous prophecy in the Old Testament by the prophet, Isaiah (1:23; Isaiah 7:14; cf. Micah 5:2). Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit (1:16), not Joseph.
2. This event of Christ’s becoming human flesh is known in theology as the Incarnation. The following can be noted regarding the nature of Christ.

3. Christ has two full, complete natures: one fully divine, and the other fully human, yet He is one person. The two natures are inconfused, unchangeable, indivisible, inseparable (Chalcedon Creed A.D. 451). When Christ became incarnate (human flesh), there was a veiling of His glory. He did not lose any of His divine attributes, but voluntarily limited the use of His divine attributes in some ways.
4. Christ was born of a virgin human woman, yet He remained sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22). The Holy Spirit was the agent of His conception, and somehow sanctified, or protected the human nature of Christ, and preserved it from the sinful corruption inherent in the adamic nature (Luke 1:35). It must be noted that sin, or the corrupted human nature, is not a necessary part of human nature. Adam and Eve in their creation did not have a sin, or corrupted human nature. Sin is like a disease that has intruded, invaded, infected and corrupted our original, basic nature (cf. Genesis 3:17; Romans 7:17, 21). Christ is the perfect man, and also the firstborn of a new order of creation (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
5. The purpose of the incarnation was redemption, *“for it is He who will save His people from their sins”* (1:21).
6. It is of importance to note the abundant amount of prophetic Scripture that Matthew uses to demonstrate and document His teaching and assertions. Prophecy of this nature, of course, assumes the reality of miracles and the supernatural. Only God can predict the future, thus, He was speaking through His prophets. In the very first chapter there are the supernatural events of a virgin birth, an angel speaking, and a prophecy being fulfilled some 700 years after Isaiah uttered it.

C. THE INFANCY OF THE KING.

The Magi, the family's exile to Egypt, and return to Nazareth is mentioned in chapter two. The Magi may have been of the group that Daniel headed many years previous during the Babylonian captivity (Daniel 2:48). Daniel was very famous among them (Daniel 1:20). Daniel's prophecies of the coming Messiah would have been known by the wise men of the Mesopotamia.

D. THE PREPARATION OF THE KING'S MINISTRY.

1. John the Baptist announced the presence of the King (3:1-12). His message was, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (3:2). Repent refers to a change of mind that leads to different behavior (3:8). In 3:3, John quotes from Isaiah 40:3, which is a direct reference to the Messiah of Israel.
2. Of special note in John's announcement (3:3) is that the reference in Isaiah claims that the Messiah (Jesus) is God. The Person in question of Isaiah 40:1-10 is called God at least 10 times. The words are Elohim

(40:1, 3, 8, 9), Yahweh (40:2, 3, 5, 7), and Adonai (40:10). We have a clear assertion of not only Jesus being the promised Messiah, but also His Deity. Jesus Christ is the God of the universe. These are bold statements, and, again, Matthew considers fulfilled prophecy as sufficient documentation for his claims.

3. The King is baptized (3:13-17). Several things can be noted regarding this baptism of Jesus.
 - This act initiated Christ in His work.
 - His Person and work was qualified by the Holy Spirit, thus Christ's authority came from the highest source.
 - Christ is introduced as the Son of God.
 - Regarding baptism, in that culture baptism was symbolic and had at its core the meaning of being identified with a group with commonly held beliefs. Christ's baptism was voluntary, and He "*went up out of the waters,*" which indicates immersion. The word "baptize" means immersion, and is a transliteration into English from the Greek language. This baptism identified Jesus with the movement of John the Baptist, which was a pre-church, or pre-Christian movement. (See note on Mark16:16). Jesus was identifying with the Messianic Kingdom.
 - Another observation from Jesus' baptism is that Christ did not need to be saved; thus, baptism was not a sacred rite leading to His salvation.
4. The King is seen in the Trinity (3:16, 17). In these verses, we see identified all three members of the Trinity: the Spirit of God descending (i.e. Holy Spirit), Jesus who was introduced and baptized, and the voice from the heavens (the Father). (Note the comments on Matthew 28 concerning the Trinity).
5. The King is tempted (4:1-11). Christ was tempted three times, and answered each temptation with Scripture. Satan either misquoted Scripture, took it out of context, or twisted it to fit his purpose, which was to hinder the work of God. If Christ had sinned, He would have been disqualified as Savior and thus God's plan for humanity to be redeemed would have been thwarted. Christ was tempted, yet was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21). The test permitted by God on Christ was not to tempt Christ to sin, but to demonstrate His sinlessness.
6. The King's retirement to Galilee (4:12-16). Matthew also records that this event, which marks the beginning of Christ's public ministry, was also predicted by Old Testament Scripture.

E. MIRACLES

The Bible is full of reported miracles. The universe was created. Moses parted the Red Sea. Jesus walked on water, was born of a virgin, brought people back from the dead, and He came back from the dead. Miracles are possible, probable, have and do happen, and are grounded in God Himself. The miracle of Christ's resurrection is the greatest proof of Christianity.

However, the issue of miracles raises many questions. What are they? How does one determine if an event is a miracle? Can Satan do miracles? Are miracles for today? As we will see shortly, Jesus accomplished many miracles. In answering some of the questions raised, I recommend that you turn to the "special comments" section at the end of this commentary on Matthew under, "Miracles."

II. THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE KING (4:17-16:20).

A. HIS MESSAGE (4:17).

The message of Christ was, "*Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Repentance means a change of mind, heart, and goals.

B. HIS WORKERS CALLED (4:19, 21, 22)

Jesus challenged His followers, "*Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.*" To follow Jesus means fishing for the souls of men and women: evangelism. Called were Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, and John (4:18-20). His ministry focused in the Galilee area.

C. HIS METHOD (4:23-25).

Christ traveled and engaged in teaching, preaching, and healing. He was forceful, showed initiative, used mass coverage and had great fame. Jesus gathered a large following (4:24, 25).

D. HIS TEACHING (Chapters 5-7).

Located in this section is the famous Sermon on the Mount, which was given to describe what life is to be like in the Messianic Kingdom. Indeed, it is how life is to be lived in any time of human existence. The Sermon does not present the way of salvation, but the course of living life for God's people. Though the kingdom age has not yet come to earth (Christ's kingdom was rejected), these principles still apply to believers today.

Figurative language is used in places; thus, in any literal interpretation, one must look for the literal principle to which the figure points. For example, Jesus talks about plucking out one's eye if we look with lust upon a woman (5:28, 29). He did not mean that in a literal sense, else virtually all men would be blind! The principle is to contain lust, and secondly, the consequences of sin is so dangerous it is better to be blind than to wake up in hell.

The principles in the Sermon were an explanation of “repent” (4:17), and to the Jew contrasted the letter of the law to the spirit of the law. The Sermon also reveals the character of God. Three main principles stand out in this Sermon.

1. The spirit of the Law counts as well as the letter.
2. Life is to be lived as before God, not man.
3. The Sermon reveals the desperate need for grace toward humanity.

The sermon content can be described as follows.

1. **Character:** people’s character is supreme in the Kingdom. The Beatitudes speak of spirituality, morality, and martyrdom.
2. **Influence:** people’s influence is to be like salt, to flavor and preserve. Influence is like light that reveals reality and truth.
3. **Laws:** laws are for life, purity, truth, justice, enemies, alms, and prayer. The Golden Rule is stated in 7:12.
4. **Relationships:** relationships between people and with God are emphasized.

Famous segments of Jesus’ teaching include the following.

1. The Beatitudes (5:3-12).
2. Various laws involving relationships, character and conduct (5:1-6:4; 7:1-5, 12).
3. Instruction on prayer and fasting, including the “Lord’s Prayer” (6:5-18; 7:7-11).
4. Money and every day anxiety (6:19, 34).
5. Spiritual sensitivity and life’s priorities (7:13-29).

E. HIS POWER (Chapters 8, 9).

By His miracles, Christ proves His authority to establish the Kingdom, and to give its laws. His power was displayed in a remarkable manner in at least 12 specific ways.

1. Power over disease (8:1-4).
2. Power over physical space (8:5-13).
3. Power over evil spirits and disease (8:14-17).
4. Power over humanity (8:18-22).
5. Power over natural forces (8:23-27).
6. Power over the spirit world and Hell (8:28-34).
7. Power over sin (9:1-13).
8. Power over law, tradition, and the administration of God (9:14-17).
9. Power over death (9:18-26).
10. Power over blindness (9:27-31).
11. Power over dumbness (deafness) and disease (9:32-35).
12. Power over prayer and ministry (9:36-38).

A practical note on Christian ministry is found in these verses: Jesus was moved and motivated by compassion for those in need. He said that opportunity for ministry is vast, but not to expect that all Christians would be sincerely involved in

the harvest Christ has promised. Rather than despair, we are to pray that God will rise up earnest soul-winners and Christian workers. Implied is the promise of positive results to faithful labor. Note that the harvest (or work) of God is the souls of men and women. The welfare of people, both temporal and eternal, was the primary focus of Jesus. He was not interested in gaining for Himself power, wealth, fame, or great programs.

F. HIS KINGDOM PROCLAIMED (Chapter 10).

Christ sent His disciples out to proclaim the Messianic Kingdom to Israel. They were given miraculous powers to confirm the message. Great miracles, however, did not convince the hearers. Note that this commission to Christ's disciples is not the same as the commission of Matthew 28:19, 20. The key characteristics of the chapter 10 commission are the following. See also the comments on Matthew 28, note #D regarding kingdoms.

1. This message is to Jews only. Gentiles are specifically excluded. The chapter 28 commission is to all ethnic groups.
2. The purpose of this commission was to announce the presence of the Messianic Kingdom, while the chapter 28 commission is to make disciples of Christ.
3. The commission of the Church is not in view in this chapter: thus, one must be careful and cautious in applying this commission to today's methods of ministry and evangelism. For example, it is appropriate for missionaries to raise their support before they launch out in a new country.

Some believe that verses 21, 22 are a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. The reason is that the text of chapter ten speaks directly to establishing the Messianic Kingdom. This Kingdom was rejected by Israel (they crucified their King), and postponed to a future date at the end of this age (28:20; Acts 1:6, 7). Therefore, some of the material applied directly to the immediate mission of the disciples Jesus sent in chapter 10, other principles apply to ministry in this present age, and some events will happen yet in the future when the Messianic Kingdom is established.

Some clarification is given to distinguish an Apostle and a disciple. A **disciple** refers to one who is taught by another, or just a learner. In the Bible this learning has reference to both content and lifestyle. An **apostle** literally means, "one sent forth." The apostle performs the function of ambassador who represents the interests of the one who sent him, and delivers his message.

There were evidently two classes of apostles in the New Testament. There were the original 12 Apostles appointed by Jesus, and they have a special place. Secondly, there were other apostles who traveled about, yet did not have the authority of the original Apostles. Another exception was Paul who had apostolic authority. The qualifications of an apostle were threefold.

1. Actually seeing Christ and being an eyewitness of His resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1).

2. Having been given miraculous sign-gifts (Acts 5:15, 16; Hebrews 2:3, 4).
3. Having been selected by Christ or the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:1, 2; Acts 1:26).

G. HIS KINGDOM PROGRAM REJECTED (Chapter 11).

The beginning of the King's rejection begins in chapter 11. Jesus attributes several Old Testament Messianic prophecies to Himself (vv. 5, 10), and identifies John the Baptist fulfilling the Old Testament prediction of the arrival of Elijah before the coming of Messiah (v. 10; cf. Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 4:5). He refers to Himself as the Son of Man (v. 19). Three things are noted in this chapter.

1. John the Baptist was rejected (11:1-19).
2. The King was rejected (11:20-24). It is written that, "*He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent*" (11:20). As a consequence, He pronounced judgment.
3. Since the nation rejected the King, He consequently gave the great invitation to individuals (11:25-30).

H. HIS GREAT INVITATION (11:28-30).

This section of Scripture has been one of the all time favorites of the Church. Many troubled souls have been encouraged and given hope from these gentle, humble; yet, utterly profound words of Jesus. Actually, it staggers our mind to realize this invitation is from God to a race that hates, rejects, abuses, and ridicules Him. It is an invitation to escape the futility of this life, and the terrible punishment of the next life that comes to those who reject Christ. This invitation is to the unsaved to gain relief from the burden and penalty of sin.

This wonderful invitation comes in a context of Christ's great compassion. He looked upon the masses, "*And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd*" (Matthew 9:36). Since the invitation also follows the Sermon of the Mount, with its high standards of life, it points to our great need of the grace, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion from Christ. The Sermon on the Mount leaves us undone and helpless in our sin before God. But, Christ is full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

1. The first part of the invitation is the offer of salvation, "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest*" (v. 28). This verse speaks of three things: a burden, the call, and the promise. The burden is sin and religion. Sin brings guilt, penalty, and fear. Religions are built to attempt a relief from sin, but they fail. Trying to work for one's salvation is seen the world over, but it utterly fails. The call is to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions the personal invitation to Himself at least seven times in this section. Christianity is a personal relationship, not the adoption of a religion with its host of regulations and rules. The promise is rest. Religion is a burden, but not Jesus. He personally removes the

burden. Rest does not refer to cessation of work, but refreshment of soul so as to be fit for work.

2. The second part of the invitation is the offer to come learn from Jesus. This refers to spiritual growth, and discipleship. He said, *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls”* (v. 29). The requirement is taking the yoke, which refers to entering into submission to Jesus. Since Jesus is gentle and humble, it adds to the attractiveness to submit to Him, His teachings and morals about this life and the next. The result is an inner rest in life with peace and quiet, humility, and gentleness – like Jesus. Where pride, bitterness, and anger dwell, there is mental labor and pain (Cf. James 3:14-18).
3. The third part of the invitation is to come serve with Jesus. He said, *“For My yoke is easy, and My load is light”* (v. 30). If the work is “easy and light,” then it is well suited to us. Easy means well fitting. He is saying the life of worship and service He gives us is not bound to gall us, like a crudely carved yoke galls (rubs sore) the necks of oxen. Our task and life is measured, and made to fit us. Whatever God sends for us to do is made to fit our needs and abilities. The burden is light because it is placed on us with love, gentleness, and sensitivity. Jesus was a carpenter before entering into ministry. Legend has it that he was the best yoke maker in Galilee. Men came from all over to buy His yokes for their animals. Allegedly, there was a shop sign on Jesus’ carpenter shop that read, “My yokes fit well.”
4. Finally, in service, the service given to us is directed by Him. Jesus refers to “My” yoke, load, rest, and lesson plan. It is His work, and He assigns it according to His plans to accomplish His purpose for the world, our lives, and the church.

To summarize:

1. Come to Jesus to find rest (salvation)
 - The burden
 - The call
 - The promise
2. Come learn from Jesus (spiritual growth).
 - The requirements
 - The result
3. Come serve with Jesus (service).
 - Work suited to us
 - Work directed by Him

I. HIS CHANGE OF PROGRAM (Chapter 12).

1. This chapter marks the turning point in Matthew. Christ is rejected by the Pharisees, and claims to be greater than the Sabbath, which was a claim to deity. The kingdom is no longer preached. The relationship of the King to Israel is changed: He now goes to the Gentiles (vv. 46-50).
2. The unpardonable sin (vv. 22-45) is addressed, which is defined as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This sin was the Pharisees attributing the great works of Christ to Satan, rather than the working of the Holy Spirit. Some believe this sin cannot be repeated today. Others believe the unpardonable sin refers to one refusing the evidences, proofs and prompting of the Holy Spirit, and thus rejecting Christ as Savior.
3. This chapter also points up the furious spiritual warfare the world is involved in. Jesus demonstrates His power over the spiritual world, and Satan, by exercising authority over demons.
4. Satan is specifically identified. He is a real being. Satan was created by God as an angel. He rallied many angels to his side, and then rebelled against God. However, Satan and his followers were cast from heaven, raise havoc here on earth, which is their base of operations, but will be eventually cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. He has an intense hatred for God, His program, creation, and His people. (Cf. John 8:44; Matthew 4:1ff; 12:22-28; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Revelation 12:9; 20:10; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-15ff.).
5. The demons who follow Satan, and do his bidding in his continued evil, violent, horrible opposition against God, are those fallen angels who originally followed Satan in his rebellion. This identification is best made by comparing Matthew 12:24-27 with Matthew 25:41. In the first case, Jesus identifies Satan as prince of demons, and later identifies them as Satan and his angels.

J. HIS PRESENT KINGDOM ON EARTH (Chapter 13).

In this chapter, Jesus taught what the kingdom of heaven is like on earth in its present form during the Church age (13:11). He taught this truth in parable form. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. One must get the meaning of the earthly story, the point of comparison, and then apply it spiritually. Five major aspects can be seen concerning the kingdom of heaven (See comments on the kingdom of heaven at Matthew 28, note D).

1. The major aspects concerning the kingdom of heaven are given. These are the major characteristics of Christianity as a whole throughout the history of the Church.
2. The sower, seed, and soil points to the proclamation of the kingdom.
3. The wheat and tares point to false professors (conversions) in the kingdom.

4. The mustard tree points to the visible, massive expansion of the kingdom.
5. The leaven points to theological corruption in the kingdom.

Jesus took great care in explanation of the parables, which do describe the various conditions Christianity finds itself.

1. **The parable of the sower** (1-23) shows the various responses to the Word of God. The teaching is good for church growth and evangelism expectations. To understand the full picture of this story, see also Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15). Several principles can be learned regarding evangelism and conversions.
 - Not all who hear the gospel will receive Christ.
 - Not all who receive Christ will stay faithful. Some will fall away because of the stigma of being a Christian, desires for the things of this world, worries of this world, and the love of money. Perhaps 25-33% of those who convert to Christ will follow on to productive Christian growth and service.
 - Not all Christians will produce the same in spiritual results.
 - There is satanic opposition to the spiritual work of God.
 - The sower is never scolded; thus, we are to remain faithful to get out the Word of God.
2. **The parable of the wheat and tares** (24-30) teaches that Satan plants false professors (Christians) within the Church. He explains further in vv. 34-43. Not all who claim to be Christians are true, born again believers.
3. **The parable of the mustard seed** (vv. 31, 32) shows the vast growth of Christianity. Soul-winners, missionaries, and church planters can take heart. Indeed, Christianity now accounts for about 33% of the world's population. This includes all who claim some adherence to the Christian Faith, but as Jesus teaches us in this chapter, not all are true Christians.
4. **The parable of the leaven** (v. 33) warns of the permeation of the teachings of the Word of God with false teachings. One must be sure to carefully teach new converts, and always be honest, clear and accurate with the Scripture when preaching and teaching the Bible. This does not mean, however, that all people of God will agree 100% on every doctrine or passage in the Bible. Leaven usually typifies evil in the Bible, and Matthew seems to understand leaven to be false teachings that the disciples are to be on guard against (Matthew 16:6, 11, 12). It must be stated, however, that some take the leaven to be the good, penetrating influence of the gospel.
5. **The parable of the hidden treasure** (v. 44) highlights the great value of the kingdom. We must remember the great and high value of the Christian ministry. The souls of people and the Word of God last forever, but everything else in this world passes away.

6. **The parable of the pearl of great price** (vv. 45, 46) teaches the great value of the gospel. Nothing in our existence is as important as where we spend eternity. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ gives any hope. Only through our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to save us from our sin offer any remedy for our eternal destiny. Nothing is of greater value or importance.
7. **The parable of the dragnet** (vv. 47-50) teaches the reality of Christianity in its expression on this world. It is a mixture of good and bad. The net, thrown by the angels at the end of the age, gathers both good and bad and separates them. One cannot have a pure church in this age. If we try casting out all those we think are not saved, we might throw out some of the good with the bad. This is not to suggest, however, that we pursue a deliberate policy of unregenerate church membership, nor to refuse to apply church discipline when appropriate and biblical. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation, not condemnation.
8. Of special note is that three times Jesus appealed to Old Testament prophecy to document His teaching (vv. 14, 15, 32, 35, 43).
9. Jesus also gives clear teaching of the reality of future judgment, and that the judgment on the wicked will be very severe (vv. 42, 50). He also makes clear that there is a reality that is wicked and another that is righteous (v. 41, 49). In other words, Jesus believed in absolute, never changing, universal principles of morality and activity.

K. FURTHER REJECTION OF MESSIAH (13:53-16:12).

1. Jesus was rejected by His hometown (13:53-58). They were astonished that one who had grown up in their town could display such wisdom and power. Also, the text record four brothers (James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas), and mentions that He had several sisters. These were siblings born after Jesus' miracle birth. Unbelief also dampened Jesus from doing many miracles. The Gospels record 35 miracles performed by Jesus.
2. Jesus was rejected by Herod, who had murdered John the Baptist (14:1-13). This Herod was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, and whose rule was from 4 B.C. – A.D. 39). Herodias was a very calculating woman who craved power. She had been the wife of Philip, who was Herod's half brother. However, she had been persuaded to leave Philip, and marry Herod. It is better, she thought, to be married to the ruler, rather than the ruler's brother. The problem was that John the Baptist spoke out against the arrangement, and Herodias had to silence anything that would cause her to lose her newfound wealth, status, and power. Thus, she conspired to have John put to death.

3. Herod, on the other hand, recognized the truth that John spoke. Herod was weak. He let his sinister wife influence him to have John imprisoned, and also killed. His appetite for Herodias, and his pride displayed in fearing loss of face in front of his peers (v. 9), led him to allow evil to overrule good. He even expressed remorse over John's death.
4. Jesus, moved by compassion (14:13-36) performed many miracles of healing on those in need. He healed the sick, fed 5,000 from only five loaves and two fish. He went away to pray by Himself, walked on water, allowed Peter to walk on water, quieted the wind, and become impatient with His disciples for their lack of faith.
5. Jesus was rejected by the scribes and Pharisees (15:1-20). They attacked Christ for His transgression of manmade religious traditions (v. 2). He appealed to the Word of God (v. 3), exposed their hypocrisy, corruption, and their external form of religion that covered up a wicked heart. True worship is from the heart, and not external ritual.
6. Jesus performed more miracles (15:21-39). He healed the Syrophenician woman's daughter, and fed the 4,000. The lessons of humble faith are taught. Faith means believing that God will do what He said He would do. It is grounded in the objective Word of God, not in subjective feelings, or presumptive expectations of God.
7. Jesus was further rejected by the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:1-12). Jesus exposed their wickedness: the Pharisees for engaging in hypocritical external religion while neglecting the matters of the heart, and the Sadducees for rationalistic unbelief.

L. THE KING REVEALS HIS CHURCH (16:13-20).

1. Now that the Messiah has announced and demonstrated His Messianic Kingdom, of which Israel was awaiting, and being rejected by His own (John 1:11), Jesus mentions in more specific terms what will happen next. This is the first time He mentions the Church (16:18), which is the interim program between the Old Testament and yet future Messianic Kingdom. The Church is mentioned only here and Matthew 18:17. It refers to that body of saved people (Christians) from the time of Pentecost until the future Rapture. In general use, the word, "church," (Gr. *ekklesia*) refers to an assembly. During the New Testament times, however, it became a technical term referring to the body of Christ, or all Christians as a whole. The Epistle of Ephesians describes the theological orientation of the body of Christ as the Church. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22, 23).
2. The passage starts by Jesus seeking from the disciples who they think He is. Peter confesses, based on the evidence of the words and works of Christ, that Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (v. 16).

3. The fact of the Church coming into existence is grounded, and has as its starting place, the Apostle, Peter, who represented all the Apostles (See Matthew 21:42, 43; cf. John 20:19-23).
4. Jesus' announcement that the Church was to be built "upon this rock" refers back to the confession of faith (16:16, 17) of Peter, and His proclaiming who Jesus was. The "rock" is the Person and work of Jesus Christ, as Peter understood and explained later in his epistle (1 Peter 2:6-8).
5. It is good to, again, note that the creation of the Church was yet something to be done in the future.
6. The keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter in the sense that he was allowed to open the doors of Christianity for the Jews (Acts 2), and the Gentiles (Acts 10). Heaven and the King in heaven initiate the binding and loosing. The Apostles only announced the fact. They were given authority to declare what God has decided (cf. John 20:22, 23). Only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7). The declaration is that whoever receives Christ will be saved, and those who do not, will be damned (John 3:16, 36).

III. THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF THE KING (16:21 – 27:66).

A. THE PREPARATION OF THE KING (16:21-chapter 25).

1. **There is the prediction of His suffering, death, and resurrection.**
Satan energized Peter to try to divert Christ from His work. The lesson is to realize the role of Satan in disrupting the work of Christ even through the leadership in the church. The life of a true disciple of Christ is that he has set his or her mind and plans to the interests of God. Note the great value of the gospel. It is greater than anything in this world (16:26).
2. **The transfiguration of Christ is revealed** (17:1-13; Luke 9:28-36; Mark 9:2-13). Jesus is entitled to the glorification of His human nature, because of His sinlessness and obedience. Seen here is a preview of the exaltation and future kingdom of Christ. Moses and Elijah represent those who Christ will bring with Him, either by death or translation. Note that the disciples could recognize Moses and Elijah, which indicates that we will be able to recognize each other in Heaven. Several things may be noted that gives us perspective into the spiritual world.
 - There was verbal communication among Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.
 - There was an implied conscious awareness of both heavenly and earthly matters on the part of Moses and Elijah.
 - Implied, there were the rational processes required of normal conversation.
 - The two from heaven were recognized by their features or forms, which evidently were bodily forms.

- Moses and Elijah were known by their names, which apparently are eternally assigned to individuals.
 - From these observations, we may conclude that there exists no such thing as “soul sleep” whereby individuals slip into a slumbering state of unconsciousness at death. The righteous evidently go directly to heaven and are actively involved in the ministries of God, whatever those ministries may entail – at least that is the case of Moses and Elijah.
 - Other aspects of life in heaven seem to include active fellowship, travel, planning, access to God, service, and experiencing all that is involved in glory (Luke 9:30, 31).
3. **Jesus did many more miracles, and taught** (17:14-chapter 20). Several things can be noted.
- There is great reward for faith (17:14-21). The lunatic referred to probably had epilepsy, which in this case, was caused by demon possession. The actual word (Gr. *seleniazo*) for “lunatic” (v. 15; cf. Matthew 4:24) literally means, “to be moon struck,” or more generally to be crazy. In the past, it was thought that one cause of madness was connected to certain phases of the moon. The symptoms of the boy recorded here, and in Mark 9: 14ff. mimic that of epilepsy. One must be cautioned, however, that not all mental or physical problems are caused by demon possession. For example, in Matthew 4:24 there is a list of those brought to Jesus for healing, and the demon possessed and epileptics are referred to separately. The stress in this section is for the exercise of faith.
 - Christ again predicted His resurrection (17:22, 23). This was another demonstration of His Deity. Only God can predict and control history.
 - Christ also taught that Christians are not to give offense to the gospel (17:24-27). In this case, the tax was collected to pay for the expenses of the temple. The temple was connected to God and service to Him. Since Christ is the Son of God, then he was exempt from paying taxes. The royal family does not collect taxes from themselves. This is another claim of Deity for Christ. It also teaches that it is wise to let some issues go, and not fight over them, even if one is in the right.
 - The need for humility is pictured in childlike faith (Chapter 18). Concern must be cultivated toward the lost. Church discipline is required, and forgiveness is an important virtue.
 - Various human problems are addressed by Jesus (19:1-26). He demonstrates healing power, teaches about divorce and remarriage, attitudes toward children, and the temptation of wealth as seen in the rich young ruler. It is important to note that Jesus quoted from Genesis

1:27 and 2:23, 24. He affirmed God's creation of humanity, the creative intent for marriage to be between a man and a woman, and that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. For more detail on marriage, divorce and remarriage, see Matthew 28, letter G.

- Jesus was a creationist, and did not believe in Darwinian evolution. He believed in the literal account of creation of Genesis. He believed we were created by God in an instant, and did not evolve over time. He also believed people are distinct from the animal world, and did not evolve from a common ancestor with animals such as the apes.
- Christ speaks of spiritual truths about the Kingdom (19:27 – chapter 20). There is great reward for putting the Kingdom first in our priorities. Christ rewards willingness to serve. Believers are not to envy what Christ gives others. Humble service is to be desired over attaining great rank and recognition

4. **The triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem** (21:1-17). Royal honor is given to Christ as He enters Jerusalem offering Himself as the Messianic King (see verses 1-5). He exerted His authority in the cleansing of the temple from bankrupt, greedy religion. He condemned the making of financial profit in the name of religion. (See comments on money changers in Matthew, Chapter 28, and note #E).

5. **The nation of Israel rejected in parable form** (21:18 – 22:14).

- The illustration of the cursed fig tree is given by Jesus to picture Israel's rejection, because of her spiritual barrenness in spite of every advantage. Matthew places this story right after Christ cast out the money changers from the temple, and turned it into a place of healing and ministry. He accused those ruling the temple of running a robber's den, rather than conducting a house of prayer and ministry to the needs of people. The temple operation had the appearance of good, but was fruitless, and was therefore useless as to its creative purpose and design. Regarding the fig tree, leaves covered the tree that Jesus came to, which made it look prosperous and fruitful. Fruit accompanies the leaves on a fig tree. However, this tree that looked luxurious and fruitful was, in fact barren – just like the barren religion of the temple. Christ's miracle of cursing the tree is the only recorded miracle of judgment. It illustrates the judgment placed on the Temple in A.D. 70 when the Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem. Christ also exalts prayer and faith in this event.
- Two parables are given concerning vineyards to illustrate the fact that the kingdom of God would be taken away from Israel, and given to the church (cf. Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:7; Acts 4:11 with Matthew 21:42-45).

- The king (God the Father) and His son's (Jesus Christ) wedding feast illustrates an invitation given to Israel, and her rejection of the Son, the king's rejection of Israel and subsequent invitation to the gentiles. This is a forerunner to the Great Commission where the invitation is to the entire world.
- 6. The attempted entrapment of Christ by His enemies (22:15-46).**
- By the Herodians. This group was the "peace at any price" people, the ones aligned to the Herodian party and promoting appeasement of Rome. They were the secularists of the day, under the rule of the Herod Dynasty, who received their appointments from Rome.
 - By the Sadducees. Christ taught that there is life after this life, we remain alive after ending this life, there will be a resurrection of the body, and there will not be procreation and/or marriage in Heaven. However, male and female is not ruled out. His great message to the rationalists of His day was the spiritual realities of the Scripture were true. A rationalist is one who places their trust in their own reason alone, and not the disclosures from God.
 - By the Pharisees. In the face of the outward, legalistic titles and rituals of the Pharisees, Jesus said the Law was summed up in two great commandments: love God completely, and one's fellow humanity as one self.
- 7. Judgment on the scribes and Pharisees and Jerusalem (chapter 23).**
At least eight "woes" are directed against the scribes and Pharisees. He called them blind guides, serpents, and brood of vipers. He taught that they would go to hell (23:33). The sins of the scribes and Pharisees were that they did things to be seen and honored by men (motivated by pride). They pretended to be godly, but inside were filled with greed, sought converts for their own selfish interests, perverted the Word of God to their own end, neglected justice, mercy and faithfulness. They were indulgent, robbed God's people, were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness, and persecuted the godly. These were strong words against the official leadership of Israel by Jesus.
- 8. The signs of the second coming of Christ (chapters 24, 25).**
- Jesus predicted the total destruction of the temple (24:1, 2). The first temple was built by Solomon, but destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. when Judah was carried away into captivity. Following many delays, the temple was rebuilt by the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (Haggai 1:1) in 516 B.C. Herod the Great started rebuilding in 20 B.C., and the lavish and massive buildings were completed in A.D.

64. The temple buildings were completely destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. Jesus' prediction came true.

- The disciples ask Jesus questions regarding end times (24:3). Some think one question was in the mind of the disciples, others think there were three. They did ask when Christ will come back, what will be the signs of His coming, and what are the signs or events of the end of the age. In their mind, they were asking when the Messianic Kingdom would be established, and what would it look like, including the arrival of Christ, the Messiah. Jesus taught about the signs of His coming (24:29-31; 25:31-46), and the signs of the end of the age in 24:4-28.
- The four important themes of chapters 24 and 25 are these: Christ is coming back. It will be physical, personal, and visible. Second, there will be a great tribulation on earth just prior to His Second Coming. Jesus draws a connection between the end times and the book of Daniel (24:15), declaring there will be a time of tribulation on earth beyond anything that has happened in history. Daniel called it the "abomination of desolation."
- Third, there will be judgment when He returns. Connected to this third theme is the fact of eternal punishment in hell being the fate of Satan and his fallen angels – along with those who reject Christ. Eternal life is the lot of those who are Christ's. The lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10, 14, 15) will contain Satan, his angels, plus people. This destination is described as being severe punishment (fire), and eternal as to duration. The same word to describe "eternal" life (v. 46) is used to describe "eternal" punishment; thus, if there is a heaven where the just will spend eternity in bliss, then there is a place where the wicked will spend eternity, but in fiery punishment. Fourth, He stresses the need for watchfulness and faithfulness (24:32-51).
- For an extended summary of hell, see the notes on Luke 16:19-31 and Mark 9:42-52.
- Following is a common view held by Pretribulational Dispensationalists, which is a view held by many, but not all, evangelicals.

9. The Dispensational Point of View.

This section is very important to the Dispensational Point of view. They see the contents of chapters 24, 25 generally as follows.

- The characteristics of the first half of the seven year Great Tribulation are given in 24:4-14, while the second half is described in 24:15-28).

- The appearance of Christ at the end of the Tribulation (24:29-31) is personal and visible.
- Christ presses the need for watchfulness (24:32-51). In view is Israel during the Tribulation. Only those Jews who are looking for the return of Christ will be saved when He comes.
- The judgment of regathered Israel is seen (24:31; 25:1-30). The teaching is of the true remnant of Israel being taken into the Messianic Kingdom when Christ does establish His Kingdom on earth, which was the kingdom rejected by the nation Israel at His first coming. The qualities stressed are watchfulness and faithfulness. These two chapters tell of life during the seven year Great Tribulation (cf. Daniel 9:24, 27; Matthew 24:15; Revelation 11:2), and are addressed to the nation of Israel during that time. The church will be raptured (taken to Heaven; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) at the start of the Great Tribulation and will return with Him at the end of the Tribulation (24:30, 31; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12) for judgment upon a wicked world.
- The Judgment of the Gentile nations is seen (25:31-46). These are individual gentiles left on earth at the end of the Tribulation. They are judged on the basis of how they treated Israel. Those who passed judgment are allowed to enter the Messianic Kingdom (25:34).

B. THE SACRIFICE OF THE KING (chapters 26-27).

1. **The Passover is changed** into the Lord's Supper by Jesus Christ (26:1-35). The Passover was a type, or symbol of the ultimate sacrifice for our sins by Christ.
2. **Christ is seen in prayer** in the Garden of Gethsemane (26:36-46). Prayer was considered by Christ as a key to spiritual victory. Prayer is a key to overcoming temptation (v. 41). Peter and the disciples asserted their loyalty to Christ, but forgot to pray; consequently, they deserted Christ. Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to the will of the Father.
3. **Christ was betrayed by Judas**, and arrested by the Romans (26:47-56). Jesus constantly maintained that the events of the hour were preplanned by the Father (e.g. 18, 24, 31, 32, 39, 42, 45, 53, 54, 56). This tells us that God makes history, and the events of the centuries are going according to His plan. It tells us that there is a massive spiritual realm in which momentous events are occurring beyond our awareness in this physical realm. The chief priests, elders, and high priest plotted to murder, and paid Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray Christ.
4. **Jesus tells us the two fold purpose** of His coming: to offer Himself as Messiah to the nation Israel (26:63, 64). The representative of Israel, the

- high priest, Caiaphas, violently rejected the Messiah (26:65, 66). But, there was a second reason Christ came. That was to become a sacrifice to pay the penalty of our sin (26:28). He was our substitute. One must note that Jesus has already told the disciples that the Messianic Kingdom was yet to come at a future date. He reaffirms this prediction in 26:29.
5. **Christ was tried** (26:57-27:10). Peter's denial (26:72) was caused primarily by spiritual dullness and prayerlessness (26:41). Peter repented of his sin and was forgiven (26:75), but Judas hung himself (27:5). Judas was not a saved man (John 17:12). The sequence of Christ's trials were:
 - A hearing before Annas, a prior high priest (John 18:12-14).
 - A trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1).
 - A trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:2, 11-14).
 - A trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
 - A second trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:15-26).

 6. **Jesus surrendered Himself** to be crucified while being examined and found innocent by Pilate (27:11-26). Pilate found that Jesus had broken no Roman law, and did not consider Him a political or military threat. By His resurrection, Christ proved He was Messiah, the Christ. Consequently, Jesus was not guilty of any wrong. Jesus could have escaped at any moment with the help of multitudes of angels to deliver Him (26:53), but He proceeded to fulfill the Father's plan (26:39, 54), volunteered Himself to the suffering of the cross, and gave up His life.

 7. **Jesus was crucified and died** (27:44-56). Several things may be noted concerning His death.
 - Christ tasted the pain of sin and separation from the Father, which was something He had never before experienced (46).
 - Darkness and an earthquake fell upon the earth.
 - Christ was not killed, but He yielded up His own spirit (50).
 - The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. This showed that the new and living way was open into the presence of God (Hebrews 9:1-8; 10:19-22).
 - Graves were opened, and many saints were raised and probably followed Christ to Heaven after His resurrection (52, 53). Christ was the first fruits of a great company of glorified, resurrected to follow (1 Corinthians 15:20).
 - Vivid testimony from the Roman centurion confirms Christ's Deity (54).

 8. **The burial** (27:57-66) of Jesus Christ was made secure by the grave being sealed and a Roman guard posted to prevent the stealing of Christ's body.

IV. THE CONQUEST OF THE KING (Chapter 28).

The conquest of Jesus over death, sin, and the devil was accomplished in His resurrection. Because of that event He paid the penalty of sin, and can provide eternal life to all who receive His as Savior. He reconciled the elect to Himself.

A. HIS RESURRECTION (28:1-15).

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (cf. 27:55).
2. An angel rolled away the stone in front of the tomb.
3. The Roman guards fainted from fear.
4. Jesus was raised in bodily form (v. 9).
5. Hardened hearts conspired to lie about the resurrection. Even in the face of incredible evidence, men still rejected the truth (cf. John 3:19, 20; Romans 1:18). This amazing incident shows the limited usefulness of an apologetic that seeks to “prove” the existence of God or the truth of the Christian gospel to the unsaved by evidence and reasoning. If anyone does not want Christ, no amount of evidence or logic will convince them otherwise. The great value of apologetics is that it confirms the reasonableness of the Faith to the believer. If the evidence of Christ and many others coming back from the dead is not sufficient, then what other evidence can one offer?

B. THE GREAT COMMISSION (chapter 28:16-20).

This section shows the great shift of Christ’s commission. Earlier, Christ told His disciples to go only to the Jews, and specifically avoid the Gentiles. Furthermore, the specific content of the message was the Messianic Kingdom (Matthew 10:5-7). In stark contrast, however, Christ now tells His disciples to specifically go to everyone, and the command is to make disciples of Christ – not establish the Messianic Kingdom. The gospel of personal salvation through Christ is the message. Several things may be noted regarding the Great Commission.

1. Christ has all authority. The commission is a command.
2. His commission is to all believers.
3. The main thought is “making disciples” (v. 19).
4. The extent of the commission is to all nations (ethnic groups) everywhere in the world, and all through history.
5. The process of disciple making is three fold:
 - Going: the target is all ethnic groups everywhere.
 - Baptizing: implied is soul-winning, and bring converts into the church as baptism means identification with a particular group.
 - Teaching: all things are to be taught, implying a life-long process covering all aspects of theology and the Bible. Obedience is required. As the disciples were taught to be soul-winners, so should all Christians be taught that skill.

6. The power for the Commission is the presence and active participation of Christ.
7. The motivation for the Great Commission is at least:
 - Obedience because of Christ's command.
 - Because humanity is lost eternally without Christ.
 - Because Christ is the only way of salvation (John 14:6).
 - Because Christians are the only group commissioned to take the gospel to the entire world.
 - Because the world needs the gospel.
8. The Commission is repeated in Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8.

C. THE TRINITY (28:19).

Since this section of Scripture speaks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I will spend a short space examining this reality of the Godhead.

1. This verse is a strong verse for the Trinity of God. The one God (the term, "name" is singular in form) is revealed to us as three, co-eternal, co-equal persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), who are distinguished from one another. All three Persons equally, fully, simultaneously, and eternally share on one common identical nature, or essence as seen in the singular, "name." (See also John 10:30; Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32-34).
2. This equality and eternity is revealed in other ways in Scripture. All three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are revealed as separate Persons; yet, they are all revealed as God. Furthermore, we are taught that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4); consequently, we must try to understand the Scriptural evidence.
3. Though the Trinity is complex and beyond full comprehension by humanity, it is not contradictory. The complexity is that limited humanity is trying to understand and explain the God of the universe, but we do not have the capacity do such a thing. It is like a dog trying to explain the complexities of the Los Angeles International Airport. The Trinity may be defined as, "In the nature of the one God there are three eternal distinctions which are represented to us under the figure of persons, and these three are equal" (A.H. Strong. *Systematic Theology*, p. 304).
4. The biblical teaching on the Trinity does not mean there are three gods (polytheism) (Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4ff.), Nor, does the Trinity mean there is one god appearing in three forms or modes. For example, God does not function as the Father, then switch hats and function as the Son, then switch roles and act as the Holy Spirit. This error is called "modalism." (Cf. John 6:27; Ephesians 4:6; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

5. One way theologians view the Trinity is called the “**economic Trinity**.” This means that each person of the Trinity has a separate role in the administration of the universe. For example, the Father planned redemption, the Son made it possible, and the Holy Spirit applies salvation.

6. Another way theologians view the Trinity is called the “**ontological Trinity**.” Ontology has to do with the study of the essential nature and relationship of things. Regarding the Trinity, the ontological dimension refers to the fact that the three eternal persons within the Trinity are marked by a certain, definite, logical order of derivation. The focus is on the order of relationships. The Father is the First Person, and is the eternal source (1 Corinthians 8:6). God the Son is the Second Person, and is eternally begotten or generated by the Father (John 1:1, 14, 18; Philippians 2:6). God the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, and eternally proceeds from the Father and Son (Hebrews 9:14; Genesis 1:2; John 14:26; 15:26). In the ontological relationship, the priority of time or dignity or nature is not in view, but only the logical order of the relationships. Unfortunately, the terms used, “begotten, generation, proceeding” imply beginning and succession in our limited human language, but here I use them in an eternal sense – and order of relationship.

7. I must give special attention to the word, “begotten” (cf. John 1:14, 18; Hebrews 11:17; Genesis 22:2). Some claim that this term is proof that Jesus is a created being. The Greek word, “*monogenous*”, however, is also used to describe a unique, special, one-of-a-kind relationship. For example, this word is used in Hebrews 11:17 when referring to Isaac as the “only begotten” son of Abraham. Isaac, in fact, was not Abraham’s first or only son; thus, the word refers to a special relationship. Actually, Ishmael was the first born son to Abraham in a chronological sense.

8. In this space, I offer two more demonstrations that Christ is fully, and eternally God, and not the first born of God’s creation. In Colossians 2:15 it is stated, “*And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.*” However, the next two verses qualifies this distinction, “*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*” Since Christ existed prior to any of creation, and secondly, it would be impossible to create Himself, then He must be God.

9. A second point is that since God the Father is an eternal Father, then He had to have had an eternal Son. Otherwise, He could not have been an “eternal” Father.

D. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. (See comments on Matthew, chapter 13).

Much controversy has occurred through the years regarding the Kingdom of God. Is it the kingdom of God, of heaven, Messianic Kingdom, or something else? The following classification of biblical evidence may help clarify the issue. The important thing is this: when we speak of a kingdom, what kingdom do we mean?

As a starting place, I note the following. A Kingdom must have at least four elements: a ruler, people who are ruled, a realm of ruler ship, and the exercise of that rule.

Another compounding factor is the relationship of the church to the kingdom. What is the relationship? Various views have been held. Augustine equated the church and the kingdom in his book, *City of God*. The upshot was the giving the church absolute authority on earth. Another view, Postmillennialism, teaches that the earthly kingdom is the church today. Reformed theology sees all the world structures under the Lordship of Christ with the church as the agent effecting His Lordship. They do not view the church as a distinct, unique New Testament institution, but rather the continuous communion of God’s people from the Old Testament.

Following is a summary of the various views of the kingdom as gathered from biblical data.

1. The Bible refers to the Gentile kingdoms of the world (Daniel 2:36-43), but which are under the overall establishment and ruler ship of God (Acts 17:26; Romans 13:1).
2. The Bible refers to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.
3. There are the kingdoms of this world, of which Satan is the ruler (Matthew 4:8, 9; John 12:31). The unsaved are his subjects (Ephesians 2:1-3). Satan’s rule was gained by default on Adam’s part. God is in the process of reclaiming that rule. Satan rules by the permission of God.
4. The Bible teaches of a universal, eternal kingdom, of which God is the ruler (1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 145:13). Christian theology includes angels within this universal rule. God’s rule is eternal, and always has and will be in effect. The church is part of God’s universal kingdom in the sense that He designed it, brought it into existence, rules over it, and it takes a place with everything else God has created and rules over.
5. The Bible teaches there to be a spiritual kingdom, which includes all the saved of all time. Entrance into this kingdom is by the experience of the

new birth (John 1:12; 3:3-5; Matthew 6:33; 19:16, 23, 24). In this age, the true church made up of born again believers is equivalent to the idea of the spiritual kingdom. Jesus is the King of this spiritual kingdom (John 18:33-37).

6. The Bible teaches of a messianic kingdom. Sometimes this is referred to as the “millennial” kingdom. This is a literal, earthly, and eternal kingdom. Christ will rule over this kingdom from the throne of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The rule will extend worldwide and to all peoples during the millennial kingdom, and will commence with His second coming (Isaiah 24:23; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6). Jesus accepted the title of King of the Jews (Matthew 27:11, 29, 37). The church is distinct from the messianic kingdom. They are two separate entities.
7. Jesus taught of a “mystery” kingdom in Matthew 13. It was a mystery in the sense of never before having been disclosed to humanity (Matthew 13:11). This kingdom began with Christ’s first advent, and will end at His second advent (Matthew 13:39, 40). We are currently living in that kingdom. God rules over the people of earth who have related themselves in some way to “Christendom.” Several things may be noted about this present mystery kingdom.
 - It is distinct from the messianic kingdom, because that kingdom was already known to the Jews from Old Testament Times. They were, and still are, expecting the messianic kingdom.
 - It is distinct from the spiritual kingdom, because it contains unsaved people as well as the saved (Matthew 13:41-43, 47-50). This feature makes this grouping distinct from the spiritual kingdom where only saved people are members.
 - It is distinct from the universal kingdom, because it is not eternal (Matthew 13:49; 28:20), which is the case of the universal kingdom.
 - It is distinct from the church, but includes the church under its umbrella. This wide umbrella of the “mystery” kingdom includes true believers (Matthew 13:43), false believers (Matthew 13:38), and wicked rejecters of Christ (Matthew 13:49).
8. The terms “kingdom of heaven,” and kingdom of God” are not synonymous, but are many times used interchangeably (Matthew 16:23, 24). The kingdom of heaven is used almost exclusively by Matthew, who uses it some 33 times. Since the Jews could not say the word for God, it would be preferable for Matthew to use the less offensive term, kingdom of heaven. His audience was primarily Jewish. The exact meaning of the kingdom of God/heaven must be determined by the context. Generally,

the kingdom of God refers to God's rule wherever it exists, while the kingdom of heaven is the rule of God with respect to the earth.

E. THE MONEY CHANGERS (See Matthew 21:1-17).

Jews of Christ's day needed to pay yearly temple tax. For those traveling over a distance it was in inconvenience to bring what was needed for the sacrifices: lambs, bulls, wine, oil, salt, incense, etc. Resulting from this need, the Jews provided merchants who would exchange the money brought by the travelers – monies which had the image of a divine Caesar, or some symbol of paganism. Because of their abhorring idolatry, these coins had to be exchanged to probably Syrian silver coins, or Jewish copper coins.

The money changers charged a high exchange rate fee of 12% or higher. They also sold the animals and sacrificial supplies to the pilgrims at an excessive profit. It was this merchandizing to which Jesus objected, particularly in the outer courts where the distraction would hinder the gentiles from praying. Jesus accused them of making the temple a "den of robbers" (Mark 11:17). They were also in violation of Scripture, which prohibited traders from being in the temple (Isaiah 56:7; Zechariah 14:21).

Jesus condemned the greed and profiteering on the part of the religious privileged under the cover of official religion, and at the expense of the common people. This hindered true worship, and placed money as a higher priority than obedience and love to God.

F. NOTE ON THE CHURCH AND STATE. (See notes on Matthew 22:15-21; 16:13-20).

Concerning the relationship between the church and state, Christ taught that each have separate responsibilities, spheres of operation, and functions. For example, the Great Commission is the central function of the church, but a central function of government is to establish order and resist evil (Romans 13:1-7). Allegiance is to be given to both (Matthew 22:21).

Every individual has free, equal and direct access to God, and is to remain free to worship God (or not to worship God) according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. Both government and the church have been created by God and are under His rule (Romans 13:1-7), and are used by Him to carry out His purposes. There are also satanic forces that are permitted and limited by God to influence governments, and the Church (Matthew 4:8, 9).

From the Bible's point of view, the political powers are not to run the church, and the church is not to rule in the political realm. However, it does not call for a rigid wall of separation between the two. God is the ultimate source of good, defines what is evil, and has established both church and state. The state enforces, even by the sword, what is good and to resist evil. But, the state learns what is good and evil from the church, which is the repository of the truth, the Word of God (1

Timothy 3:15). The conclusion, then, is godly men and women, educated in the matters of the God of the Bible become the politicians who establish order and resist evil as defined by God.

G. MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, and REMARRIAGE (See Matthew 5:32; 19:3-12; notes on Mark10:1-12).

Regarding marriage and divorce, the problem given to Jesus by the Pharisees involves two different views on divorce and remarriage. One group of scholars, the followers of Shammai, held that divorce and remarriage was legitimate only on the grounds of sexual immorality. On the other hand, the followers of Hillel were more generous on what causes were legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage – even allowing trivial matters.

Jesus answered by giving God’s perfect intent and ideal for marriage, which is monogamous and permanent. But, we live in a sinful world made up of sinful people who make mistakes in life. Moses gave concessions on divorce (v. 7, 8; cf. Deuteronomy 4:1-4), which seems to fall on the side of Hillel. Jesus granted the exception of immorality (Gr. *porneia*), or illicit sexual intercourse, which seems to fall on the side of Shammai.

In the case of Moses, he gave the grounds of divorce as, “some indecency.” It is uncertain what “indecency” means. It could not have been adultery, because the punishment for that was death (Leviticus 20:10). The grounds could have been something like a physical problem such as the inability to have children. The woman was permitted to remarry, but not to her original husband.

In the Old Testament, following the Babylonian captivity, it should be noted that Ezra (chapter 10) demanded the Israelites to divorce and put away all their foreign wives and children. Old Testament priests were not allowed to marry divorced women (Leviticus 21:14), but the vow of divorced women was considered binding (Numbers 30:9). God divorced Israel for her unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 3:8; cf. Hosea 1:9; 2:2ff).

There are several views on the issue of divorce and remarriage in the Christian world. In deciding how to view this issue several things must be kept in mind.

1. There is always a tension between ideal behavior and relationships, and the real world of fallen humanity. Moses, Jesus, and Paul (cf. Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:7, 9; 1; Mark 10:4-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; Romans 7:1-3) recognized this tension and made adjustments. Bad things happen in life. People sin.
2. One must take into consideration all biblical teachings regarding the issues of divorce and remarriage before arriving at a conclusion.
3. Divorce is not good, but is a painful experience to go through. Divorce is not the ideal. Malachi considered divorce to be sin (Malachi 2:14-16).

However, in his catalogue of sins, he also included offering defiled food for sacrifice (cheating, swindling 1:7, 13), false instruction or teaching (2:6, 7), insisting that good is evil (2:17), robbing God of our tithes and offerings (3:7-12), and spiritual arrogance (3:13). One must not single out one sin, and ignore all others, and make the one sin somehow more terrible than all others. Inconsistency in applying judgment evenly across all sins is hypocrisy, which is sin.

4. Divorce and remarriage, since exceptions were made, evidently are not on the level of a terrible sin such as premeditated murder. The New Testament gives two grounds for divorce: sexual immorality and perversion (Matthew 19:9), and desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15). Remarriage is also allowed by the Bible, "*Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you should marry, you have not sinned*" (1 Corinthians 7:27, 28; cf. 7:39; Romans 7:1-3).
5. Forgiveness, grace, mercy, and compassion from God are available for all sins – with the exception of rejecting Christ as one's savior (1 John 1:9).
6. Restoration and healing is the end goal of human difficulties, including divorced people (Galatians 6:1). This involves restoration between the divorcing couple, and also between the guilty and the church.
7. When Christians reflect on the condition of their own lives in light of the Sermon on the Mount, we must all realize our desperate need for the grace of God, and be careful in judging others. For example, Jesus said that even fantasies of immorality renders us guilty (Matthew 5:27, 28).

H. MIRACLES

1. Since we have already mentioned major miracles occurring, and since Jesus' ministry was full of miracles, then we must give some space to the subject of miracles. Let me repeat myself from the earlier comments on miracles. Miracles are possible, probable, grounded in God, and do actually occur. However, miracles, whether today or in history, or whether within or outside of Christianity, have always generated much disagreement. Much of the trouble is in the definition of miracle; another problem within evangelical Christianity is whether or not miracles ceased at or somewhere around the end of the establishment of the Christian church – or if they are still a normal part of church life today.
2. This discussion starts with an understanding of God's providence and decree. These doctrines are the base line for understanding miracles. By God's decree I refer to that eternal plan of God whereby according to the council of His will, and for His own glory, He has rendered certain all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11: Romans 8:28-30).

3. Unfolding out of the decree of God is God's providence. This activity can be defined as that continuous activity of the Triune God whereby He controls all things and events in the universe for the purpose of bringing to fruition His own wise and loving plans by directing all things to their appointed end in ways consistent with the free moral agency of His creatures. God has a plan for the universe, and is personally carrying it out.
- a. In other words, God has planned, designed and created all things in the universe, preserves them, cooperates with all subordinate powers He has established, and directs and governs all things to the end results that He has appointed. This means that God has created all the mechanisms, forces, means and principles, such as the laws of nature, to carry out His plan for the universe.
 - b. A special category of God's providence is the miracle. Here is the problem, God has put into place all the means, laws, principles, and forces to accomplish His one plan. These means function in a fairly predictable, consistent manner. For example, God does not directly cause every blade of grass on earth to grow, but has established forces of nature to bring about the growth of grass around the globe. These general laws of nature theologians call secondary, ordinary, or regular use of the means and mechanisms God has set into operation. What, then, is a miracle?
 - c. Miracles can be divided into at least two categories. First, God may work an "ordinary" miracle by using the regular, normal means, or laws of nature. An example would be bringing a physical healing through the use of medication or the body's regular healing mechanisms. Second, there are the "extraordinary" miracles where God works directly and without the use of secondary causes in their usual operation. An example is the resurrection of Christ from the dead, or the parting of the Red Sea for Moses. All miracles are the result of the exercise of the supernatural energy of God. Following are two definitions given by contemporary theologians, Wayne Grudem, and Millard Erickson. Both give good discussions in their works.
 - "By miracle we mean those special supernatural works of God's providence which are not explicable on the basis of the usual patterns of nature."¹⁶

¹⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 406.

- “A miracle is a less common kind of God’s activity in which he arouses people’s awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.”¹⁷
4. There are several purposes for miracles given in the Bible.
- a. To glorify God (Matthew 9:8; John 9:3).
 - b. To certify the supernatural nature of the Gospel message, the messenger and content of a supernatural Revelation from God (John 3:2, 20:30,31; Hebrews 2:3, 4; Romans 1:4; Exodus 4:21, 28-31).
 - c. To demonstrate that the Kingdom of God was among Israel (Matthew 10:7, 8; 12:28).
 - d. To help those in need (Matthew 20:30, 34).
 - e. To remove obstacles to the execution of Christian ministry (Matthew 8:15).
 - f. To make salvation possible as seen in the resurrection of Christ.
 - g. To reveal various aspects of Christ such as His power and authority.
 - h. To serve as an instructional aid such as the case of Christ cursing the fig tree (Matthew 21:18-22).
 - i. To lead to a saving faith such as Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-19, 29; 20:30, 31), and the Apostles Peter and John (Acts 3:1-19, note vv. 18, 19).

I continue here to examine the teachings of men of God who have helped form our Faith – and see what they say about miracles. A modern theologian of immense stature, Norman Geisler, defines a miracle as, “an exception to the general pattern of events”.¹⁸ He is careful to distinguish God’s miracles from Satanic miracles (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9), the trickery of magic, and events of which there is no known cause. Geisler maintains a true miracle from God must meet the following criteria: I paraphrase.¹⁹

1. It is an exception to the normal pattern of events.
2. It must accompany a communication of truth from God.
3. It must influence and be connected to a teaching or expression of morality.
4. It must not violate a normal function of natural law or processes.

Another mighty theologian of a past generation defines miracles as follows. A. H. Strong wrote, “A miracle is an event palpable to the senses, produced for a religious purpose by the immediate agency of God; an event therefore which, though not contravening any law of nature, the laws of nature, if fully known, would not without this agency of God be competent to explain.”²⁰

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 355.

¹⁸ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p.280.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 281, 281.

²⁰ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), Vol., 1, p. 119.

Strong helps us to understand what a miracle is not. He wrote,

“(a) A miracle is not a suspension or violation of natural law; since natural law is in operation at the time of the miracle just as much as before. (b) A miracle is not a sudden product of natural agencies—a product merely foreseen, by him who appears to work it; it is the effect of a will outside of nature. (c) A miracle is not an event without a cause; since it has for its cause a direct volition of God. (d) A miracle is not an irrational or capricious act of God; but an act of wisdom, performed in accordance with the immutable laws of his being, so that in the same circumstances the same course would be again pursued. (e) A miracle is not contrary to experience; since it is not contrary to experience for a new cause to be followed by a new effect. (f) A miracle is not a matter of internal experience, like regeneration or illumination; but is an event palpable to the senses, which may serve as an objective proof to all that the worker of it is divinely commissioned as a religious teacher.”²¹

The reading and understanding of these theologians is not for the faint hearted. It is hard to comprehend, but then, the subject matter is difficult. Consequently, keep your thinking hat on, because there is one more to go. Charles Hodge (1797-1878) is another great theologian. He explains miracles this way. (And the thinkers of old did not break up their paragraphs, either). Hodge wrote,

“According to the “Westminster Confession,” “God, in ordinary providence making use of means, yet is free to work without, above, or against them at pleasure.” In the first place, there are events therefore due to the ordinary operations of second causes, as upheld and guided by God. To this class belong the common processes of nature; the growth of plants and animals, the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies; and the more unusual occurrences, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and violent agitations and revolutions in human societies. In the second place, there are events due to the influences of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men, such as regeneration, sanctification, spiritual illumination, etc. Thirdly, there are events which belong to neither of these classes, and whose distinguishing characteristics are, First, that they take place in the external world, *i.e.*, in the sphere of the observation of the senses; and Secondly, that they are produced or caused by the simple volition of God, without the intervention of any subordinate cause. To this class belongs the original act of creation, in which all cooperation of second causes was impossible. To the same class belong all events truly miraculous. A miracle, therefore, may be defined to be an event, in the external world, brought about by the immediate efficiency, or simple volition of God.”²²

²¹ Ibid., p. 117.

²² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Charles Scribner & Company, 1871), Vol. 1, p. 618.

Finally, we approach the issue of whether miracles are for today, or if they stopped at the end of the apostolic era. The following conclusions seem justifiable.

1. There is disagreement among evangelical Christians. In other words, the jury is still out, at least to some evangelicals. But, to quote a Lutheran theologian, “With respect to miracles we must hold, on the basis of Scripture, a) that God can perform miracles whenever He pleases, since He is the sovereign Lord and the laws of nature, which in themselves are never invariable are nothing else than His own divine will applied to the things created....”²³
2. Since God is God, He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants. In fact, the very fact that the universe exists, and we are a conscious part of it seems to be an exceedingly incredible, astonishing, and marvelous reality (miracle?). We should marvel at its awesome complexity, and the power of God to sustain what He desires to His glory. We must be careful to not reduce God to our rather anemic limitations. Augustine said, “that a birth is more miraculous than a resurrection, because it is more wonderful that something that never was should begin to be, than that something that was and ceased to be should begin again”.²⁴
3. Further, it seems to be held by most that God performs “ordinary” miracles today. Consequently, the question concerns the “extraordinary” miracles.
4. Most of the problem seems to be in the definition of “miracle.” For example, if one defines miracle as does the Deist where God established the universe with all its governing forces and agencies, but does not meddle or interact in any way with His universe, then miracles would be impossible. Furthermore, if one sees miracle as the contradiction to, or breaking of the laws of nature, then it would be difficult to defend such a view. But then again, since God created all the laws of nature, it seems that He could create new ones, nullify old ones – or manipulate them any way He wants.

For example, since there will someday be a new heaven and earth (cf. 2 Peter 3:4-13; Revelation 21:1-5), it seems logical to believe that there might be some new laws of nature in effect.

²³ John Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 174.

²⁴ Cited by Strong, p. 117.

We must also remember that we in the physical realm are also in close connection to the spiritual world (cf. Ephesians 6:12). Spiritual realities can and do influence what happens in the physical realm.

Finally, if one loosely defines miracle as merely an unusual working of God in His universe, then virtually anything and everything could fit under the category of miracle. In such a case, one would be forced to conclude that everything is a miracle, or that such a category is meaningless.

5. One must be careful to not buy into the antiscapernatural bias of our secular, anti-God Western cultural environment. God does do the miraculous today.
6. One must also beware of the outlandish, outrageous, unquestioned, undocumented claim to miracles that circulate among some Christian circles. For example, I once heard of a poor African girl that allegedly had her eyes plucked out by birds. Then, in a dramatic feat of the miraculous, God placed new eyes back into her eye sockets. Personally, I don't believe that story for a minute.
7. Finally, we must be on guard for the trickery of Satan and his demons. They do miracles too, as Paul writes, "that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness..." (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10a).

With this, we finish a short examination of the Gospel of Matthew. In this examination of the Gospel of Matthew, our objective was to give a short summary of the background, context, and introductory issues, some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. We then gave an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments, including the one we just finished: miracles.

**THE GOSPEL OF MARK:
A BACKGROUND, OUTLINE,
ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

By Dr. Willis C. Newman

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**BRIEF CONTEXT OF
THE GOSPEL OF MARK.**

In this examination of the Gospel of Mark, my objective is to give a summary of background and introductory issues, some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. I will then give an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. EMPHASIS.

This gospel targeted gentiles – primarily Roman readers. To the Jew, matters of prophecy were important to establish credibility. That is why Matthew used prophecy extensively. In Matthew there are about 128 quotes or allusions to Old Testament prophecy, but in Mark there are about 63. Luke gives about 90-100.

From the point of view of the Roman, the idea of divine power, work, law, conquest, and universal sway were important for credentials. Mark did not include the genealogy of Jesus, or emphasize the Messianic Kingdom; however, Mark did record Christ's acceptance of the messianic title (Mark 14:61, 62), and other's understanding of Christ's claim to Messiah: Pilate, Roman soldiers, and the chief priests and scribes (15:2, 9, 18, 31, 32.).

Mark also used some Latin words the other gospel writers did not use. For example, he the word "executioner" in 6:27; and the coinage term "cent" in 12:42. For the benefit of his Roman readers, Mark explained some Aramaic words (5:41; 7:34; 15:22).

Mark is about action. The word "straightway" (*eutheos*) is used 84 times in the New Testament, and 44 of times are in the Gospel of Mark. Mark gives more space to miracles. The book is deed oriented. It is the "street preacher" Gospel. It presents Christ as the mighty worker, the faithful servant of the Lord, which also is the book's theme.

B. AUTHOR.

The writer of the Gospel is the disciple, Mark, who was very close to the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). He was a wealthy, Greek speaking Jew, a Hellenist, who grew up in Cyprus of a Levitical family (Acts 4:36). Mark's first name was John. His mother's name was Mary, whose house in Jerusalem was one of the meeting

places of the Christians (Acts 12:12). This suggests comfortable circumstances. Mark was also a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10).

Mark wrote under Peter's influence. Mark is presented as the explainer of Peter. Although Mark is never mentioned in the Gospel as being the author, there is a virtually unanimous tradition from the earliest church that accepts Mark as the author. The oldest source comes from Papias (c. A.D. 60-130), who was a second century Bishop of Hierapolis. Justyn Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165), an early Christian apologist, called the Gospel of Mark, "Memoirs of Peter." The historian, Eusebius, in his *History of the Church*, quotes Papias as follows.

This also the presbyter used to say: Mark indeed, who became the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, as far as he remembered them, the things said or done by the Lord, but not however in order. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been his personal follower, but at a later stage, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to adapt his teachings to the needs of the moment, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the oracles of the Lord: so that Mark committed no error in writing certain matters just as he remembered them. For he had one object only in view, viz to leave out nothing of the things which he had heard, and to include no false statement among them.²⁵

C. MARK'S MINISTRY.

Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Antioch on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). At Pamphylia, Mark left the team, and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 15:38). Paul disliked this action so much that he refused to take him on the second missionary journey. Mark went along with his cousin, Barnabas. Perhaps Paul thought Barnabas was guilty of nepotism, that Mark was only a rich kid who couldn't take it when the going got tough! At any rate, two missionary teams were sent rather than one, and the compassion of Barnabas helped forge a mighty soldier of the Faith in the person of Mark.

The breach between Paul and Mark was completely healed, for later we find Mark with Paul at Rome, and was one of the faithful few who stood by Paul. He is Paul's honored "*fellow worker*" and a great "*comfort*" to him, and "*useful for ministering*" (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Though Mark failed in his early ministry (Acts 15:39), he became a solid church leader (Colossians 4:10, 11). He was a close associate of Peter, first becoming acquainted with Peter and Paul in Jerusalem at his mother's meeting house (Acts 12:11, 12, 25). He probably founded the church at Alexandria, Egypt, and died a martyr's death. The Coptic patriarch in Egypt claims to be the successor to Mark.

²⁵ Cited by R. Alan Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark*, in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.26.

D. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The Gospel of Mark was written in Rome either in A.D. 50, or before 70 – some 30 years after the resurrection of Christ. The book was written before A.D. 70, because the destruction of Jerusalem was still future (13:2). Mark received the facts of the life of Jesus from Peter, and surely Mark himself was eye witness to many of the events of Christ. Mark, however, was a convert of Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Mark's mother had a large, central meeting house for earliest Christians that could have been the house where Pentecost occurred (Acts 1:13ff.), and was the place Peter ran to when he escaped jail under the persecution of Herod (Acts 12:11ff.; A.D. 44). The point is that Mark and his family lived in the environment and time of the great events of Christ's ministry, were among the earliest Christians, and their place was a haven for Peter and Christian leaders. Mark could have had a superficial acquaintance of Jesus.

258 of 678 verses in Mark contain Christ's words, which is about 42% of the book. In comparison, Matthew is about 60%, Luke 51%, and John is about 48%.

II. NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS.

A. THE GENEALOGY.

There is no genealogy given in Mark. The reason probably is that the servant does not hold his position by virtue of his ancestry, but of his qualifications as a servant. There is no record of Christ's origin or birth, no mention of His boyhood, no reference to Bethlehem, and no account of His youth.

B. THE SERVANT

He is just a Servant, and as the servant, this Gospel presents Him going at once about His serving. He is the Servant of God, not man. As a true servant should be, He is found in the Gospel through Mark "straightway" at the work He was sent to accomplish. There is continuous, unbroken service and activity in this Gospel. All but three chapters begin with the word, "and." For example, He did this, and He did that, and He did the other. Christ was ready to serve at any time, ready to leave His meals, ready to move at any moment's notice, and always found as a true servant.

This is not to say, however, that the Divinity of Christ is neglected. In the beginning of the book Marks points to Christ's exalted position.

A key verse is, "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*" (10:45). The book can be viewed portraying the Servant in two roles: His service (1:1 – 10:52), and His sacrifice (11:1 – 16:20).

C. FOUR PARABLES.

There are only four parables in Mark, and all are concerned with service. They are the sower, the lamp, the seed, and the mustard seed (4:1-34). Christ is never called "Lord" in Mark until after His resurrection. There is no "Our Father" in Mark. Mark devotes a great deal of space to Christ's miracles.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF MARK.

I. CHRIST'S PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (1:1-13).

- A. Ministry of John the Baptist (1:1-8).
- B. Christ's baptism and temptation (1: 9-13).

II. CHRIST'S GALILEAN MINISTRY (1:14-8:26).

- A. His preaching (1:14-20).
- B. His great power (1:21-3:12).
- C. His personnel and parables (3:13-4:34).
- D. His mighty expressions of power (4:35-8:26).

III. CHRIST'S CLOSING MINISTRY (8:27-10:52).

- A. Peter's confession (8:27-33).
- B. The cost of discipleship (8:34-9:1).
- C. The Transfiguration of Christ (9:2-13).
- D. The demon possessed Boy (9:14-29).
- E. Christ's prediction of His death and resurrection (9:30-32).
- F. The Issue of great leadership (9:33-41).
- G. Christ's teaching about hell (9:42-52).
- H. Christ's teaching on divorce and remarriage (10:1-12).
- I. The need for a childlike faith (10:13-16).
- J. Teaching on wealth and eternal life (10:17-31).
- K. Teaching on selfish ambition (10:35-45).
- L. The story of blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52).

IV. CHRIST'S PASSION AND DEATH (Chapters 11-15).

- A. Christ's public presentation (Chapters 11-12).
 - 1. His triumphal entry (11:1-11).
 - 2. His cursing the fig tree (11:12-14).
 - 3. His cleansing of the temple (11:15-19).
 - 4. His teaching on prayer and faith (11:20-26).
 - 5. His authority challenged (11:27-33).
 - 6. His parable of the vineyard (12:1-12).
 - 7. His teachings about taxes and resurrection (12:13-27).
 - 8. His greatest commandments (12:28-34).
 - 9. His deity (12:35-37).
 - 10. His condemnation of pride (12:38-40).
 - 11. His teaching on giving: widow vs. rich (12:41-44).
- B. Christ's teaching: Olivet Discourse - future things (Chapter 13)
- C. The unfolding of Passover (14:1-52).
 - 1. The conspiracy of priests and scribes (14:1-2).
 - 2. The anointment of Christ by Mary of Bethany (14:3-9).

3. The conspiracy of Judas against Jesus (14:10-11).
 4. The Last Supper (14:12-25).
- D. The trials and crucifixion of Christ (14:53 - Chapter 15).
1. Christ's trial before Caiaphas (14:53 - 65).
 2. Peter's denial (14:66-72).
 3. Christ before Pilate (15:1-15).
 4. Christ abused by Roman soldiers (15:16-20).
 5. Christ crucified (15:21-32).
 6. The death and burial of Christ (15:33-47).

V. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION (Chapter 16).

- A. His empty tomb (16:1-8).
- B. His appearances (16:9-11).
- C. His great Commission (16:15-18).
- D. His Ascension (16:19-20).

VI. EXTENDED NOTES

- A. Observations on Judas Iscariot.
- B. Facing trouble in life: the Garden of Gethsemane.
- C. Anti Semitism.
- D. Josephus and Jesus
- E. Demons

THE GOSPEL OF MARK ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS

I. CHRIST'S PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (1:1-13).

A. MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:1-8)

As in Matthew's Gospel, Mark starts by identifying Christ as the one God of the Bible (vv. 2, 3). He does this by appealing to the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 40. The Person in question of Isaiah 40:1-10 is called God at least 10 times. The words are Elohim (40:1, 3, 8, 9), Yahweh (40:2, 3, 5, 7), and Adonai (40:10). Mark identifies this One in Isaiah as none other than Jesus Christ. We have a clear assertion of Christ's Deity. Jesus Christ is the God of the universe. These are bold statements, and Mark considers fulfilled prophecy as sufficient documentation for his claims.

In the days of old, a messenger was sent ahead to announce the arrival of a king into a village or city. It is like today where one announces or introduces a guest speaker to an audience. John is pictured as that messenger who introduces the King of all Kings to the world.

Jesus means "Yahweh saves," Christ means the "anointed one, or Messiah," and Son of God points to Christ's Deity and special relationship to God the Father.

B. BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION (1:9-13).

The baptism of John was not Christian baptism, but a call to Jews for repentance and confession of sins to gain forgiveness. To the Christian, forgiveness comes from believing the gospel of Christ. John's baptism was identification with the messianic kingdom, or the kingdom of God (1:15). Baptism, in New Testament times, was a symbolic identification with a person, teaching, or people holding a common set of beliefs. It was the initiation rite into a group. Jesus was baptized, yet He was sinless; consequently, baptism in itself does not save or forgive sins.

The Bible speaks of several baptisms: Jewish (Exodus 19:10-14; Leviticus 8:6; Hebrews 9:10), John the Baptist, and Jesus' baptism, which was not done to forgive sins, but as an act of consecration and identification. There is also spirit baptism (Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26, 27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:9-12), Christian baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38), and a baptism by fire (Matthew 3:9-12; Luke 3:16, 17). This latter baptism could refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the second coming of Christ, of a cleansing of sin, or the purifying effect of the Messiah. Baptism of various sorts was practiced by other contemporary religions. The word, baptism, means to dip, immerse, or to drench, which points to full identification.

One can see the Trinity at work in Jesus' baptism (1:10, 11). The Holy Spirit descended like a dove, the Father spoke from Heaven, and the Son was baptized.

The first action of the Holy Spirit was to impel Jesus to travel into the desert to suffer temptation by Satan. The spiritual world is opened for us, and it includes the reality of God, the Holy Spirit, Christ, Satan, and angels. The point of the temptation was not to lure Jesus into sin, but to demonstrate His purity and sinlessness. By application, it seems that Christians can expect to be tempted in our lives and ministries. Like football players are strengthened by their testing in practice, we are spiritually strengthened by facing difficulties and temptations in our life. Temptation is not a lure, but a tool for strengthening.

Several things can be noted regarding the temptation of Jesus.

1. Satan acknowledged the Divinity of Christ. The Greek construction in 4:3 indicates that Satan assumed (not questioned) Christ's Divinity.
2. Satan distorted the word of God to his own ends. He is the great deceiver and distorter of truth.
3. Satan's temptations are similar to Eve in the Garden of Eden. There Satan questioned the Word and work of God, seduced Eve to doubt God, and finally to switch loyalty and trust from God promise to Satan's lie.
4. Satan's first temptation was to convince Christ to act independently from the will of the Father by turning stones to bread. Christ quoted

Deuteronomy 8:3, which goes on to say man lives by the Word of God. By application, we are to follow the will of God in our lives.

5. Satan's second temptation was power. Satan is legitimacy in temporary rule of the political governments of the world (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:2). Of course, he rules only by permission and limitations from God. This fact points to the evil events committed by those in power. Satan is behind much of it. Power is also in the economic realm, and was also offered to Jesus. Fame is also part of the prize offered Jesus, if only He would desert God the Father and serve the selfish interests of Satan. This is the same ploy Satan used to get the angels to follow him. Jesus clearly chose His priorities and allegiances carefully.
6. Satan's third temptation was the most diabolical of all, and has several elements: faith, and loyalty. To gain some insight into the temptation, it is best to look at Jesus' answer, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (4:12). Jesus quotes from the incident recorded in Exodus 17:1-7. The people were lacking water, and began complaining to Moses about their lack of supplies. They were unhappy with the provision and promises of God. Moses defined the word "test" this way, "because they tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?'"

The implication is that they lacked the faith to trust God to supply their needs. Their lack of loyalty is also on display. The Jews were happy to leave behind the misery of slavery in Egypt, but when things began to get rough, they wanted to turn away from God and His plans.

In Jesus' case, He reaffirmed His faith and loyalty to God. He did not want to circumvent the cross to gain immediate power over the earth. God's plan is eventually to give that rule to Christ anyway. Christ could have bypassed the torment of the cross, but that would have meant we are all still guilty of our sins, and have no hope.

The application to us is to trust God, nurture our faith, and to stubbornly devote our loyalty to the God of the universe. It is also to follow the will of God. He has given each of us certain gifts or abilities, niches, and opportunities to accomplish His work through our lives. It is important to stay faithful. Be satisfied with what God has given you. On the other hand, if you can better you self and station in life, do so.

II. CHRIST'S GALILEAN MINISTRY (1:14 – 8:26).

A. EARLY MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM (1:14-45).

Capernaum was located on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was on the caravan route to Damascus, contained a customs station (2:14), and served as a station for a Roman garrison (Matthew 8:5-13). Peter (Simon), Andrew, James,

and John claimed Capernaum as their home town. They were fishermen by occupation. James and John must have come from a successful, family fishing business, because they had servants and boats. They were called to follow Jesus. They had known Jesus for some time, and were followers of John the Baptist.

Jesus challenged them to follow Him as disciples. It was not a call to repudiate their business and family, but to give their full allegiance to Christ and His cause. He said, *“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men”* (1:17). This points to a central role of Christianity, which is to gather converts for Christ. Evangelism is primary.

B. CHRIST’S GREAT POWER DEMONSTRATED (1:21 – 3:12).

1. Power over demons. Note the demon identified Christ as God (1:24).
2. Power over disease (1:29-39). He healed Peter’s mother-in-law, which indicates that Peter was a married man. Jesus prayed (v. 35), healed and cast out demons (v. 34), and preached (v. 38, 39).
3. Power over leprosy (1:40-45). The Mosaic laws for the cleansing of lepers are found in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14.
4. Power over paralysis (2:1-12). Here Christ claims to have authority over, and actually forgives sin (2:5, 7, 10). This is a mark of His Deity, as only God can forgive sin. He was aware of other’s thinking, which also displayed an attribute of God (omniscience).
5. Power over a publican. A publican was a Jewish tax gatherer, of which trade belonged Levi (2:14), later called Matthew, the writer of the Gospel. Normally, they were employees of a customhouse, a place of toll at city gates, public roads or bridges. Levi’s post probably was close to the sea on the road coming in from Damascus to Galilee. The publicans were despised by the Jews for collecting taxes, but worse for collecting it for the Roman rulers! They were considered to be ceremonially unclean, and traitors to the Jew. They were of the class of sinners, drunkards and harlots (2:15, 16). Christ did not justify their extortion, but responded and mingled with the lower classes, and interacted with them on the basis of their need.
6. Power over religion (2:21-28). Religion points to what humanity does for God, or to appease God, but true Christianity points to a personal relationship with Christ, and to what Christ has done for humanity. Religion puts another burden on humanity. Christ lifts the burden and gives rest, forgiveness, and eternal life – hope, in a word.

7. Power over the Sabbath (2:23-28). Christ claimed to be lord even over the hallowed Sabbath day. This action greatly angered the Jews, because Christ was claiming to be greater than, and above, their religious system. In fact, He was claiming deity to Himself. Christ also maintained that the Sabbath was made for man. He teaches that religion, or our relationship with God, is for our benefit – not for the benefit of a religious organization. By application, then, we can say that our church programs should be organized to serve and minister to people, and conversely, that people should not be used to maintain and support a program that exists only for the organization's sake. On Christian programs; however, one must recognize there are surface and latent needs. For example, a woman's missionary circle may seem on the surface that it is a waste of time, and that no real need is being met. However, the program might be serving the social needs of the women involved – thus, accomplishing a very important latent need.
8. Power over crippling disease (3:1-6). Christ showed anger and grief at the hardness of people's heart. His teaching is that if a person has the opportunity and ability to do good, but refuses, then that refusal is evil (3:4). His human emotions indicate His humanity, and also his deep compassion for those in need.
 - Anger is a basic human emotion, but how it is expressed is important. Jesus did not sin when He was angry, but directed that energy toward doing good. Note also that Christ's act of goodness stirred up hatred on the part of His enemies, and they sought to kill Him. Hatred harbored in the heart blinds people's eyes to goodness, good sense, and truth. The hardness of heart refers to a stubborn resistance to the purpose of God, and is the opposite of humility and teachableness that God requires.
 - One can note the important relationship and sequence on dealing with anger. Anger is a basic emotion, but sometimes anger is a secondary emotion that covers over another underlying emotion. In Christ's case, His first and underlying emotion was grief, sadness, and sorrow over the hardness of the religious leader's hearts. The secondary emotion was anger. The anger was expressed appropriately by speaking the truth to them, and then by doing an act of goodness to the man with a withered hand. Christ did not seek to retaliate with violence, or get even with His enemies. (Cf. Romans 12:17-21).
 - In contrast, the religious leaders evaluated the situation. They interpreted it as Jesus threatening their wealth, position, power, and status. They harbored a hardened heart, and closed their minds to truth. They then mentally distorted the act of kindness and goodness of healing into an act of evil, nourished their anger into a simmering

hatred, and then conspired to destroy Jesus. Their response was a violent, retaliatory act.

- Note the sequence: first, the mental evaluation, second, the emotional energy, third, then the action, or behavior.
9. Power over unclean spirits (3:7-12). (See the note on demons at the end of Mark).

C. CHRIST'S PERSONNEL AND PARABLES (3:13-4:34).

1. Christ selected the twelve apostles (3:13-21). These men became the core of Christ's followers, and the leaders who would launch Christianity into the world. There are four lists of the Apostles: Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13; Mark 3:14-19. Evidently the Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18) is the same as Judas the son or brother of James. Of these twelve, Peter, James, and John became the tight inner circle of Jesus as they were permitted on the mountain of transfiguration (cf. Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28).
2. Christ rejects His tormenters (3:22-30). The leaders from Jerusalem condemned Christ, saying He was possessed by a demon. Christ reasoned that since He was casting out demons, how could he be working for Satan? His work opposed Satan. More irrational thinking on the part of Christ's opponents.
3. Christ's spiritual family (3:31-35). The requirement for entrance into God's family is to do the will of God. The first step of obedience is to believe on His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:12, 13; 6:29, 39, 40).
4. The parable of the sower (4:1-29). This is how the Word of God is received by the world. The Word shines in testimony in the life of the believer (vv. 21-25), and results in fruitful service (vv. 26, 29). The fruitfulness of the believer comes in response to the Bible, which gives instruction, motivation, purpose, direction to our Christian service. Without the Word in our lives, we become dull, stagnate, misled, and lose spiritual power. While it is true that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, that release of power within us must have accurate expression. The Holy Spirit uses the Word in the believer's life to correctly channel and give direction to His energy release. The Holy Spirit gives attention to at least nine areas of our lives. All need the counsel of the Bible:
 - Quality of life.
 - Character of life.
 - Spiritual life.
 - Service in life.
 - Relationships in life.
 - Mental/psychological life.

- Behavior in life.
 - Purpose/motivation in life.
 - Goals in life
5. There is caution of the many worries, deceptions, and temptations that this world bombards us with, throwing us off track of God's best for us (v. 19). The gradual growing seed (vv. 26-29) represents how the Bible gradually changes one's life over time.
 6. Parable of the mustard seed (4:30-34). The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds; yet, the herb plant grows to 12 feet tall. The picture is the rapid expansion of Christendom from a tiny start.

D. MIGHTY EXPRESSIONS OF POWER (4:35-8:26).

1. Power over nature (4:35-41). The disciples were stricken with fear at the Lord's miracle of quieting the stormy waves. Jesus said that faith would cure cowardice (v. 40). The fear of verse 41 was awe and reverence at what Christ had done.
2. Power over demons (5:1-20). The delivered man responded by proclaiming Christ. He was motivated by obedience because Christ told him to go back to his people and proclaim God's mercy. No doubt the man went out of gratitude as well. It is important to give God the credit for the many blessings He gives us, and also trust Him when the hard times buffet us.
3. Power over sickness and death (5:21-43). Again faith is stressed as having great value (vv. 34, 36). Faith in God's power can accomplish much. There are three miracles of resurrection by Jesus: the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22, 35-43), the widow's son (Luke 7:11-15), and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:1-44). Jairus was an official of the local synagogue, and a devoted believer of Jesus. Not all Jewish leaders were opposed to Christ. As a practical matter, it is well to note that not all members of liberal Christian churches are non-believers – though some are, because they deny the foundational realities of Christ. Conversely, there are also those in evangelical churches who are not born again Christians.
4. Christ was rejected in His hometown (6:1-6). Unbelief is condemned. The brothers and sisters of Jesus are identified. Of course, they were half siblings. Christ's half brother, James, became a leader of the Jerusalem church, and the author of the epistle of James. Christ's other half brother, Jude, wrote the tiny epistle, Jude. Christ traveled around from village to village teaching. Christ sets the example for assertive, bold evangelistic outreach, but at the same time performing acts of healing, mercy, and compassion as He goes. He met the needs of people as He found them. From His example, we can say that Christian ministry can employ medical,

agricultural, counseling, literature, and educational strategies, as well as preaching, and church planting.

5. Christ commissioned the twelve (6:7-13). Christ's teaching methods included verbal instruction, modeling, sending the twelve out to practice on their own, having them report back to Him, rewards, correction, and finally, resting (vv. 30-32).
6. Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29). Again, pride on the part of Herod Antipas, who appreciated John, overruled the fear and admiration, and he had John murdered. On the other hand, the vindictive, murderous grudge of Herodias motivated the brutal, bloody beheading of John the Baptist. The title "king" was popularly used of Herod Antipas; however, it was not official. Herod Antipas' guilty conscious plagued him greatly; as this tormented mind thought the powerful ministry of Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected. Herod was in the midst of a war with his ex father in law, Aretas IV, the king of the Nabateans. The war was going badly for Herod Antipas, thus, he suffered much anxiety on his mind.
7. Feeding 5,000 men (6:30-44). Christ looked upon the crowds with compassion, taught them many things, and then fed them all with only five loaves of bread and two fish. The 5,000 men did not include the women and children. Organization principles can be observed: assessment of the problem, careful consideration of the alternatives to solve the problem, clear mission, inventory of resources, orderly arranging the people, clear instructions to the disciples, delegation, direct involvement (management by walking about). He matched and managed the money, manpower, machinery, materials, and methods to complete the specific measurable mission. Jesus obtained the desired results (objectives) through the effective utilization of the resources available to Him. He also needed a miracle to do it; however, the power of God was part of His resources.
8. Walking on water (6:45-52). One becomes astonished around Jesus. It is to our profit to guard against hardness of heart, which is spiritual insensitivity. The spiritual world is real, genuine, and there is a dynamic, forceful, flow between the physical and spiritual realm. Jesus and His angels are still interacting with the world of humanity today. It is to our profit to practice His presence and be watchful for those spiritual occurrences in our environment.
9. True religion (7:1-23). God looks upon the heart of humanity, not external religious works done to earn the favor of God or a reputation before humanity. To worship, one's heart should be near God. Words mean nothing if the heart does not mean them. Out of the heart proceed the evil things of mankind.

- We have the fact of evil in the world. The source of evil has been the debate of the centuries. Some blame God. Some blame the structures of society. Some deny that it exists. The Bible teaches there are two sources: Satan and his followers, and within the heart of humanity. God permits evil for His own purposes, and they are His own reasons. It is absurd to question God on His plan, since he created and controls history.
 - The Word of God is the sole rule for our faith and practice. Be careful to be honest with the Bible and teach it rightly with integrity. Preach the Bible, not the rules of humanity. A special note is that all foods are clean (v. 19), that is, can be eaten.
10. The Syrophenician woman (7:24-30). Again, faith is rewarded (v. 29; cf. Matthew 15:28). The miracle was done at a distance, again showing Christ's power over distance. This is a mark of an attribute of Deity: omnipresence.
11. Healing of a deaf mute (7:31-37). Jesus does all things well (v. 37). He constantly displays compassion on the unfortunate. This incident also relates to the issue of evil. Christ brought good wherever He went. This indicates that the ultimate intention of God is goodness, not to spread evil throughout humanity. Sickness, and evil, was first displayed by Satan in heaven. He introduced evil, with the cooperation of Adam and Eve, into the realm of the world and humanity. Satan and people do evil, not God. He only permits evil for His own purposes, but the final objective is to destroy evil, or at least confine it to the lake of fire and brimstone.
12. Feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-9). Again, and constantly, Jesus had compassion on the multitude.
13. The leaven (8:10-21). The leaven of the Pharisees is identified as hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). The leaven of Herod amounted to secularism and worldliness. We must carefully maintain our "spiritual eyes." Be aware of spiritual realities and live in light of those realities. It is good to focus on the priority that has lasting value for us in the light of eternity. Do not trade the best for something merely good.
14. Healing the blind man (8:22-26). Jesus had compassion and concern for felt needs. He just naturally had compassion and mercy. It is something that simply flowed from His nature. When we look at the world as a whole, full of war and cruelty, we can see the enormous gulf between the nature of God contrasted against the depth of fallen humanity, and the fierce evil of Satan. At the same time, however, we can see the faltering attempts of humanity to accomplish good. For the Christian, we should be consumed with zeal for good works. That is His purpose for us.

III. CHRIST'S CLOSING MINISTRY (8:27-10:52).

A. PETER'S CONFESSION (8:27-33).

1. Peter confessed that Christ was Messiah. Jesus predicted His death and resurrection, at which point Satan used Peter to attempt to distract Christ from the interests of God the Father. The practical lesson is that right priorities are stressed by Christ: God's interests are prior to and different than mankind's interests.
2. Christ predicted His death and resurrection first at this point in time. The prediction was fulfilled. This new information was puzzling to the disciples as the prophet Daniel's teaching of the Son of Man was not that of a suffering and dying Messiah (Daniel 7:13, 14). The prediction of Christ displays His attributes of Deity: omnipotence, and omniscience. He knew what was to happen in the future, and He had the power to bring it about. Only God can accomplish those feats.

B. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP (8:34-9:1).

1. Self-denial is required to be a disciple of Christ. Loyalty to Christ at all costs is taught, even to the point of martyrdom. The Romans used crosses to crucify; thus, its use as a symbol of death was vivid to believers. Self-indulgence is the opposite of self-denial. We can think that living in faraway places is dangerous, and demands great sacrifice to be a Christian. In the Muslim countries, one may quickly lose their life to become or be a Christian.
2. However, there is also danger and demands in easy places, like America. Here it is easy to be a Christian, go to church and work, shop at the mall, live in pleasant neighborhoods and fine homes – and freely operate in society. Sometimes, it seems that there is no cost to being a Christian. We are mocked and marginalized by an antagonistic anti-Christ society, but by and large we are left alone – in comparison to the hot spots of the world. Self-denial and discipleship requires sacrifice, duty, loyalty, and commitment – and the proper, effective expression of that loyalty to Christ.
3. Risk taking is required. Bold, sacrificial commitment and action for the cause is Christ is contrasted against fearful identification with Christ, the neglect of His cause, and the pursuit of the things of this world. The reward and pain for each lifestyle is clearly presented.
4. Taking up the “cross” is a picture of dedication to God's will and purpose for our lives. Those who carried a cross were on their way to be crucified, which was death. Consequently, for us to carry our cross is to arrange our priorities in life to be in subordination to God's will for our lives. Each of us is given opportunities, resources, abilities, and we can use them to advance our own objectives in life, or God's objectives. This does not

mean that we are to hate ourselves, go live on an ash heap, or preach on a street corner – although the latter is not to be despised. We are to gallantly and faithfully use whatever God has entrusted to us to the ultimate end of His glory and the cause of Christ.

5. Verse 36 points to the great value of one's soul. It is worth more than the whole world. Those who promote abortion and euthanasia have a very low value placed on life. For the Christian, we should greatly value life, because God does.

C. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST (9:2-13).

The surprise of Christ overwhelmed them. Elijah and Moses were too much for the disciples: they were frightened and confused. Peter, James and John were of the inner circle of Jesus. Their view of Christ was weak, as they assumed that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were somehow equal. God corrected them by identifying Christ as His Son who was to be listened to. Note that Elijah and Moses could be recognized, and that they went by the same names they had while on earth. Note Luke 9:31 to see what they talked about. The disciples were taught five things in this amazing incident.

1. That Christ was unique, not on an equal with Moses and Elijah (vv. 5-7).
2. That Christ must suffer, die and be resurrected (vv. 10-12).
3. That Elijah had already come in John the Baptist, but had been rejected (v. 13).
4. That heaven and spiritual realities were real.
5. That there is a very close interchange and communication between the physical and spiritual world.

D. THE DEMON POSSESSED BOY (9:14-29).

The two spiritual qualities emphasized in this incident are faith (v. 23), and prayer (v. 29). See the note on Mark 3:7-12. One can also observe from this story that demons are not all alike. Jesus said that *"This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer"* (v. 29). This assumes that there are other kinds of demons. Some manuscripts also add "fasting." Further, Christ's disciples could not cast the demon out (v. 18). Failure in exorcism is possible.

E. CHRIST'S PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (9:30-32).

Christ had already talked about His future resurrection, but now He was more specific in the details. This was something new to His disciples. They understood the kingdom to be the messianic kingdom where Christ would rule on earth. They had not seen the second aspect of Christ, which was the suffering Messiah (cf. Isaiah 53). They were baffled by Christ's teachings.

In this prediction, Christ displayed attributes of deity. He displayed omniscience (all knowing). He predicted four details that would be impossible for any human to predict. Who would or could predict their own resurrection from the dead, and

with such detail? Only an all knowing and powerful God could give the kind of astonishing details that Christ did. They were as follows.

1. He would be delivered to His enemies. This came true. Judas betrayed Him.
2. He would be killed. This came true. He was crucified.
3. He would rise from the dead. This came true.
4. He would rise three days after His murder. This came true.

One must consider this factor: Christ's prophecies came exactly, and literally true. The Gospels are full of Old Testament prophecies that came literally true in history regarding Christ's first advent. Since this fact is undisputed, then it would seem correct to consider all future prophecies to also come literally true. Thus, when Christ stated that He would yet come in the future, we should believe Him, and interpret Scripture accordingly. All the details of His future coming should also be treated and believed as literally true. In other words, the fulfillment of prophecy during the time of Christ sets a precedent for the literal interpretation of prophecy yet to be filled.

F. THE ISSUE OF GREAT LEADERSHIP (9:33-41).

The disciples were discussing what it took to be a great leader. Rank was important to the Jew, and with the kingdom at hand they wanted to know how to climb the ladder of success. Jesus did not discourage them, but told them how. He sat down, which was taking the position of the Jewish teacher teaching the group around him.

1. **The factor of servant hood.** In America our public officials are "public servants." In a similar way Christian leaders are servants to the Christian public. They freely volunteer to minister (but not out of servile position as a slave) to the needs of others. We minister even to the lowly, unlovely, unimportant people, as illustrated by Christ accepting the little child. Children were the "least" in the Jewish and Roman world. The key to success is this: sensitive, genuine, humble, sacrificial service in ministering to the needs of the flock will bring reward and advancement in God's kingdom.
- In contrast, the selfish, status seeking, power grabbing, money hungry, turf expansion and protection politics of the political, corporate, and religions world was to be deplored. One's motive for Christian leadership must be ministry and service, not money, status, power, or prestige. The leader asks not the question, "What is in it for me?" but rather, "What is in it for Christ and the other person?"
 - However, this type of leadership does not imply passivity. Jesus was assertive, task oriented, crafted careful plans, gave instructions and job descriptions, and He expected results. But, what He did was to the glory of God the Father and the good of the people. He built programs

to serve the needs of people, not the other way around: gather people to serve His program.

- Christian Leadership is always a careful balance between getting the job done (task oriented), caring for the needs of the workers (relationship oriented), serving the needs of the larger audience, bringing glory to God, and advancing the kingdom of Christ. And, of course, the Christian leader must supply the needs of his or her family. Leaders have to pay personal bills too.

2. **The factor of benevolence.** The disciples displayed a sectarian spirit of jealousy. They thought that since the other disciple (v. 38) was not going through “proper channels” he should be stopped. Perhaps they were miffed, because this man was enjoying success in casting out demons when they had failed. Jesus taught them to be unselfish. He told them to let His interests succeed wherever they might be promoted, and that there was enough reward to go around for everyone. Indeed, there are enough unsaved people in our cities and villages to overflow every church in town. We should not be jealous of the success of others. We should not steal the success of others, that is, to take credit for the effort of others.

G. CHRIST’S TEACHING ON HELL (9:42-52; see also the notes on Luke 16:19-31).

The “hell” referred to in this section is “*Gehenna*,” which is the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15). *Gehenna* was the site in the valley of Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem. Horrid human sacrifices were made there in Old Testament times (2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 2 Kings 16:3; 23:10). Evil kings made child sacrifices to the heathen god, Molech, in order to enhance their prosperity. God considered it an abomination.

In later times the valley of Hinnom became a garbage dump where a fire was constantly burning to consume the garbage. There were two main words used for hell in the New Testament. *Hades*, the other word, is a temporary holding prison for the spirits of the unsaved (cf. Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 20:13). *Gehenna* is the final destination for the unredeemed.

Other words for places of punishment include *tartarus*, the special prison for the fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4), the bottomless pit, or *abaddon* (Revelation 9:1, 2, 11) whose king is named *Abaddon*, or *Apollyon*, which means destruction or destroyer. This angel king is Satan, and his name gives us insight into his character and work.

The Bible teaches that the nature of hell is eternal judgment and punishment, absence of righteousness and goodness, and separation from God. It is both a place of residence, and condition of retribution. Jesus’ phrases to describe the place include, “unquenchable fire,” “their worm does not die,” and “salted with

fire.” He said it is better to be drowned in the sea, lose limbs and eyes than to go to Hell.

In this section, there are five distinct truths to be learned – and they come from the lips of Jesus Christ.

1. The lake of fire and brimstone (Gehenna) is a real, genuine place located somewhere.
2. This place is bursting of sharp, penetrating torment.
3. Those populating Gehenna are confined there in torment eternally.
4. The doctrine of Hell was clearly taught and emphasized by Jesus Christ Himself.
5. A choice is implied on the part of those who go to Gehenna.

Christians are often confronted with the question of how can a loving God send anyone to Hell? Several things can be said in response.

1. People choose to go to Hell by rejecting the salvation freely offered to anyone and everyone (cf. John 3:15, 16, 18, 36).
2. Those who object to the reality of Hell must answer these questions. How could a just, fair God NOT punish those who are wicked? How could a loving God overlook the horror and terror suffered at the hands of the wicked – such as Hitler, Stalin, and butchers who behead, maim, and torture in the name of their god? Were the few moments of pain and fear before his suicidal death sufficient punishment for Hitler who murdered six million Jews, plus millions of others? Does that punishment fit his crime? No. There has to be a place of judgment and punishment for wickedness beyond this life.
3. The plain fact is that Jesus taught the doctrine of Hell. And, to say there is no Hell is to call Jesus Christ a liar. The Bible clearly teaches that He is God. Therefore, to call God a liar is a very dangerous, egotistical, and arrogant thing to do. God is God, He can do whatever He wants, and the puny ranting and objections of humanity simply will not change the way He has made things.
4. It falls within the prerogative of God to define what is “evil,” and to determine upon what basis people are sent to Heaven or Hell. Just as a boss has the prerogative to hire or fire, or a jury to conclude if the accused is guilty or innocent, God, as the ultimate Judge and rule maker, has the perfect right to dispose of His creation as He sees fit.

H. TEACHING ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE (10:1-12).

The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus again. Perhaps, they thought, they could get Him to take a position that would invite opposition. One strategy could have been to entice Jesus to contradict Moses, or to antagonize Herod Antipas with his

marriage to Herodias. If the latter was the case, then perhaps Herod would kill Jesus like he did John the Baptist. All the Pharisees agreed that divorce and remarriage was permitted, but they were divided on the specific grounds of divorce. Jesus' counter was as follows. (See also notes on Matthew chapters 5, 19 & 28).

1. He directed them to the Bible, not to schools of contemporary thought.
2. He got to the core issue at stake: the hardness of their hearts. The problem was not theology, but spiritual carnality - a heart problem, not a head problem.
3. He contrasted their views of marriage to God's view, which are as follows.
4. God established permanent monogamy as the ideal pattern of marriage.
5. God's concession in the Mosaic Law was permitted because of the hardness of the human heart.
6. Marriage was instituted to be heterosexual, not homosexual.
7. The marriage of one man to one woman is instituted as the foundational family unit, separate from the previous generation. This does not excuse all responsibility to one's parents and other family members.
8. God's design is not to be altered by any human agency.
9. God's ideal intent for a broken marriage is repentance, restoration, and reconciliation.

Note: one must collect all the biblical data together before arriving at a full doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. For example, Mark cites no exception, yet Matthew cites sexual impurity (Matthew 19:9), and Paul cites desertion (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 15, 27, 28). No sin is unforgivable (except the unpardonable sin), and we all live far from the ideal that God has established for the human race. The sin of adultery is listed among several in Mark: evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, greed, jealousy, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness (Mark 7:21, 22). If the grace and forgiveness of God covers any of these sins, then it covers all of them. Finally, any sin of divorce and remarriage is not listed in this particular catalogue of sins.

I. CHILDLIKE FAITH IN CHRIST IS NEEDED (10:13-16).

The parents wanted their children blessed. Children were not give much status in Jewish and Roman society of that day; thus, Christ's disciples felt offended to be bothered with children. This act brought displeasure to Christ, and His action of blessing them teaches us that all people have dignity and worth. He used the example of childlike faith to illustrate how we are to trust in and believe our heavenly Father.

J. TEACHING ON WEALTH AND ETERNAL LIFE (10:17-31).

1. Jesus taught that it is hard for the wealthy to be saved. It is not that the rich cannot be saved, but they tend to love their money, trust in their wealth and the security, supply, status, prestige, power that money brings. They do not sense need such as the poor and disenfranchised of society experience. The crucial sin is the "love" of money (1 Timothy 6:10). The

ardent pursuit of money can distract one from the things of God, and can bring great disappointment. Wealth can be lost quickly. It is better to trust God who gives us all we need.

2. Christ loved sinners (v. 21). This fact is seen in His attitude toward the rich young man. Jesus loves sinners and rich people!
3. A person cannot save themselves (v. 7). God must do the saving. Regeneration, or being born again, is a direct act of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. The Holy Spirit renews the person's spirit and thus implanting the new life and changing the disposition of the soul and its components. Conversion is the person's act of exercising the changed will and thus, by faith, accepting Christ as Savior.
4. To follow Christ in sacrificial discipleship gains one much more than what is given up in this life.
 - One is recompensed for giving up family for Christ and His cause. This is not always required, but many times Christ calls His servants to the mission field or to another part of the world where contact is difficult or impossible with parents, children, grandchildren, extended family members and friends. The heart tug can be severe to quit the field and return home. Obedience and promise of reward motivate one to stay in the place Christ has called one to serve. Additionally, in many parts of the world, to convert to Christ means to be cut off from one's family. The Christian is rejected, disowned, and maybe even subject to death.
 - One is recompensed for giving up professional careers for the cause of Christ and His gospel. The status of Christian ministry is low in the eyes of the world, whereas careers of the world are respected and rewarded by the world. It is hard to give up high salaries, big houses, new cars, community prestige, fine clothes, professional recognition, and wealth for a job that strips one of this status, and reduces one to maybe an object of contempt somewhere in an indifferent and/or hostile environment. Christ may not always require one to live under such conditions, but He may, and He does require that one always be willing to live as such.
 - One is recompensed for giving up wealth for Christ and His gospel. God is the giver of wealth, family, and station in this life. We actually do not, then, have anything to give up or back to Him in the first place. Furthermore, He does not obligate Himself to any person. He will, therefore, give us back abundantly more than we ever give up for Him – things that He gave to us in the first place.

K. TEACHING ON SELFISH AMBITION (10:35-45).

Christ teaches us more about leadership and the traps Christian leaders can fall into. Below is a summary.

1. God selects leaders for His work (v. 40).
2. The mark of a Christian leader is humble service, not proud lordship.
3. The marks of a secular ruler, and to which the Christian is to guard against.
 - They lord it over the ruled: dominate, oppress.
 - They exercise authority over the ruled: exploit, take advantage of.
 - They sit in their seats of ruler ship to have others serve them: self-interest first, greed.

L THE STORY OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS (10:46-52).

The story of blind Bartimaeus brings us many practical lessons when we find ourselves in need. Some are as follows.

1. He was helpless in his need. He had nowhere to turn for healing.
2. He called to Jesus, but he was persistent.
3. He believed Jesus could heal.
4. Jesus answered his urgent call.
5. He responded in obedience to Jesus.
6. He was specific in his request.
7. He was healed – a miracle.
8. He immediately began to follow Jesus.

The problem of two blind men. The story in Luke (Luke 18:35-43) says the healing occurred as the party was approaching Jericho. Mark says it was while going out of Jericho. Mark says there was one blind man, but Matthew says there were two (Matthew 20:29-34). How can we explain the seeming contradictions?

1. First, we seek to reconcile and find a reasonable explanation, rather than jump to the conclusion that the Bible has contradictions in it. If we can find a reasonable explanation, then the issue merely becomes problematic – not an absolute proof of a contradiction. A contradiction would be where something is and is not at the same time. For example, a contradiction would be that Bartimaeus was blind and not blind at the same time.
2. Second, there evidently were two blind beggars. However, Mark and Luke focus on just one blind man while Matthew focused on two. When one is telling a story, one is not required to give all the details precisely as another report might give it. For example, Luke says he gave glory to God, and the people were amazed. Mark and Matthew do not record this aspect. Does this mean there is a contradiction? Absolutely not. It simply means that the reporters focused on different details of the same event.

3. Third, actually, there were several Jericho's in the area. Herod the Great had built a new Jericho, and there was an old Jericho. Evidently, the Gospel writers were using different reference points. Leaving one Jericho was approaching another.

IV. CHRIST'S PASSION AND DEATH (Chapters 11-15).

A. CHRIST'S PUBLIC PRESENTATION (Chapters 11, 12).

1. Christ's triumphal entry (11:1-11; cf. Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19). Christ offered Himself as the Messianic King, who was to sit on the throne of David. This is a literal fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, even down to riding on a foal of a donkey. The people responded by chanting a messianic psalm (Psalm 118:25). The entrance of Christ is in contrast to the kings of the day. After a great battle, the victorious king would ride into the city in a chariot with his leading men in front, and the spoils and slaves following. Daniel 9:25 is fulfilled at this point: Christ is Messiah the Prince.
2. Christ rode in as king. The people understood His purpose and praised Him as king. Christ never denied what the people said about Him. He accepted their words and intent.
3. Christ cursed the fig tree (11:12-14). Under normal times the leaves and fruit appear at the same time. On the tree in question, however, only the leaves were out. The tree illustrated Israel (Judaism), which had the appearance of fruitfulness, but was barren. Israel did not produce that for which she was created – to glorify God. Israel was unfruitful, even with every advantage and appearance. Israel was rejected.
4. Christ cleansed the temple (11:15-19). Greed was being satisfied by making a huge financial profit on religion. This marks the second time Christ cleansed the temple in such a way. (See "moneychangers" in Matthew, Chapter 28).
5. Christ taught on prayer and faith (11:20-26).
 - When praying: ask.
 - When praying: believe.
 - When praying: receive.
 - When praying: forgive.
6. Christ's authority was challenged (11:27-33). Jesus was wise, very wise. The leaders of the temple, somewhat disturbed by Jesus' actions, tried to trip Him up. They asked by what authority He did what He did. He put them on the horns of a dilemma. His starting point was a famous factual event: His baptism by John the Baptist. The crowds all believed the Baptist was a prophet. If the temple leaders said John's baptism was from God, then they lost the argument. They would be forced to concede that

Christ was from God. If, however, they said the John's baptism of Jesus was from men, then they would have popular opinion rising up against them. They lost both ways. The astonishing thing is that in the face of Christ's proofs of who He was, and their admission to that fact, they still sought to put Him to death. Their actions opposed God, of whom they claimed to worship and serve. Intense hatred blinds people to truth and reality.

7. Christ's parable of the vineyard (12:1-12). This parable was addressed to Israel's religious leaders, and they understood it was referring to them. The several points are as follows.
 - The parable vineyard describes the nation Israel.
 - The man of verse one represents God.
 - Israel's religious leaders are the vine growers.
 - The servants of verses 2-5 are the Old Testament prophets, and John the Baptist.
 - The beloved son is Jesus (vv. 6-8).
 - The announcement of judgment was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed.

8. Christ taught about taxes (12:13-17). Jesus tripped up those who were trying to trip up Him. (See note on "church and state" in Matthew, chapter 28).
 - The Pharisees brought along some leaders of the Herodian party. To say one should not pay taxes, would have brought opposition against Jesus from the ruling leader, Herod Antipas, who was Rome's governor for that area. To the Jew, it was an offense to have any graven image of a person. It was considered to be a violation of the first commandment to have a graven image of anything – including Caesar.

 - The word "Caesar" was a dynastic name of all the emperors down to Hadrian (A.D. 117-138). Tiberius was the Roman emperor during the life of Christ, and whose image was on the denarius, or the Roman coin that Jesus called for. This was the basic silver coin used in Palestine at that time. Its value was that of about an average rural worker's daily wage.

 - Tiberius was an impartial ruler, and had wisdom in his policies. But, because of domestic problems and conspiracies against him, he grew distant, haughty, suspicious and finally very cruel. The Germans also drove Rome South of the Rhine, which added to his fear and stress. Tiberius favored his governor in Palestine, Herod Antipas.

 - The Pharisees thought they had Jesus. The issue was taxes. If Jesus chose to resist taxes, then He would have the Roman's wrath. On the

other hand, if Jesus accepted the taxes, then He would have the Jew's wrath. Either way, He would lose – or so His enemies thought.

- However, Jesus took a denarius with Caesar's image on it, and said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"* (v. 17). He divided the world into two realms: secular and sacred. We are to perform our civic duties regarding the government, and we are to perform our sacred or religious duties to God. In actual practice, they sometimes overlap. For example, we are not to murder. That is a law that falls into both realms. This is a strong statement for the separation of church and state. The church and state are not one in the same. Both have separate functions. However, there is not a solid wall between the two to the extent that God should have nothing to do with government. In fact, God created governments, and is their ruler (Romans 13:1-7).
 - One must also realize that we do not have to support all the policies of government, and we are to influence government decisions when we can for the common good. We are to be the light of the world, and salt of the earth, Jesus said (Matthew (5:13-16)).
9. Christ's teaching about the resurrection (12:28:34). The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, tried to defeat Jesus by posing a theoretical question to Him. It was a silly question: if a man had several wives, which would be his wife in the resurrection? Their show of spiritual ignorance teaches us four truths about the afterlife. Jesus taught with great authority, enormous skill and unfathomable knowledge.
- First, He taught, there is no marriage union, or reproduction of children in the next life. This does not mean that we will not recognize one another (the man would know all seven of his wives).
 - Second, He did not say we will be angels, but like the angels in that we will not marry and reproduce.
 - Third, He did not say we will be sexless in the next life. In fact, the Bible teaches there are male and female angels (Zechariah 5:9-11; Daniel 9:21).
 - Fourth, as a side note, He taught that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. But, getting to the resurrection, He associated Moses as existing along with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They lived together in Heaven. Though they lived on this earth centuries apart, and had left this earth, and they were still living.
10. Jesus gives the greatest commandments (12:28-34).
- Love the one God with all one's heart, soul, mind, strength.

- Love one's neighbor as one's self.
11. Christ demonstrated His deity (12:35-37). Christ, as usual, started at a logical place the religious rulers agreed upon: Christ (the Messiah) is the son of David. He said that David considered the Messiah simultaneously both David's Son and Lord. Consequently, Messiah was God. And, Jesus was Messiah. As another side note, Jesus affirmed the doctrine of inspiration of Scripture when He said David spoke in the Holy Spirit.
 12. Christ condemned pride and hypocrisy (12:38-40). He rebuked those who appeared to be godly and respectful; yet, in their private lives and actions they used their position and influence to oppress the less fortunate. He also mentioned that these would receive greater condemnation, which indicates there are degrees of punishment in Hell. Some sins are worse than others.
 13. Sacrificial giving pleases God (12:41-44).
 - The contrast was between the poor widow who placed in the temple treasure all she had, and the wealthy who contributed large sums, but not enough to hurt themselves financially. Jesus emphasized the sacrificial giving was more important than just giving.
 - Jesus perhaps had another condemnation in mind. The Old Testament called for widows to be treated with special care, and were under God's protection (Psalm 68:5; Proverbs 15:25). Failure to care for the widows called for punishment (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:29; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6). From even the early days widows wore distinctive garb, and were treated with dignity.
 - But, just before the story of the poor widow giving her small coins, Jesus brought a scathing condemnation to the wealthy hypocrites who swindled (devoured) the widows out of their homes (12:40). This is another example of how the religious leaders opposed the work of God.

B. CHRIST'S TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES (Olivet Discourse, Chapter 13).

In this chapter, Jesus explained the general historical unfolding of future things. He predicted the complete destruction of the temple that was started by Herod the Great (vv. 1-4). The destruction was in A.D. 70. (See Matthew, chapters 24, 25).

1. He predicted the Great Tribulation (vv. 5-23). There seems to be a double prediction in vv. 5-13. The events started to be fulfilled in the book of Acts. For example, verse nine speaks of being delivered to and flogged in the synagogues. This happened early. Persecution of the church has been a

constant through church history. Wars, earthquakes, and famines have been with us for centuries. It describes human history.

2. However, in verse 14 something is described that has no parallel in history. Jesus called it the “Abomination of Desolation,” which is a direct quote from Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. It refers to a time of worldwide destruction so severe that if God does not intervene, the whole world will be destroyed (v. 19, 20). In verse 24, Jesus called it “that tribulation.” This is the Great Tribulation referred to in biblical prophecy.
3. He predicted His second coming (vv. 24-27). This event happens after the Great Tribulation, according to Jesus. It will be no small occurrence. There will be enormous spiritual and physical events that accompany the return of Christ. Christ, in making these assertions, is referring to and affirming Old Testament prophecy (vv. 24, 25, 26; cf. Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Daniel 7:13). Jesus believed Old Testament prophecy was literal.
4. He predicted the certainty of His return (vv. 28-33). He said it was certain, but that no person knows when He will return.
5. He encouraged the faithful to persevere and be watchful (vv. 34-37). Our lives are to be lived as in His presence, and with the expectation of His imminent return.

C. THE UNFOLDING OF PASSOVER (14:1-52).

The following explains the last Passover. The Passover was celebrated by the Israel during our April. It was the most important celebration of the Jews. It illustrates the heart of the doctrine of redemption, substitution, and propitiation. The Passover started while the Jews were still enslaved in Egypt, trying to gain their deliverance (Exodus, chapter 12). God had instructed them that in punishment to the Egyptians, the death angel would pass through the land at night. The firstborn of all would be killed.

The Jews were to take an unblemished lamb from each Jewish household. They were to kill it on a certain night, eat the roasted flesh, and wipe some of the blood on two door posts and the lintel of the homes in which they ate the lamb. If they did this act of faith, then the death angel would pass over that house and not kill the first born; thus, it was named the “Passover.”

This most important event illustrates the work of Jesus Christ. He was the unblemished “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29; cf. v. 36; Acts 8:32, 33; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1). He was sacrificed as a substitute in our place, and became our propitiation (satisfaction) before God (Romans 3:24, 25; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Thus, when we place our faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to

take away the penalty of our sin, death passes us over, and we obtain eternal life (John 3:16).

The Passover passed into a different observance to Christians: the Lord's Supper, Communion, or is considered a Holy Sacrament by some. The observance marks several and different things to various Christian groups. It is commanded by Christ. It is a marker of remembrance to the work of Christ, and a reminder of His coming (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). It also points to our union with Christ and other believers, of Christ's love, the assurance of His promises, and assurance of our possession of riches. It is our personal profession and acceptance of forgiveness, and our expression of thanks. Some believe that during this observance, Christ is spiritually in our presence in a special way. Others believe that somehow grace is conveyed to the partaker so as to enable and strengthen their faith.

Below is a sketch of chapter 14.

1. The conspiracy of priests and scribes to secretly take Jesus and kill Him (vv. 1, 2).
2. The anointment of Christ by Mary of Bethany (vv. 3-9).
 - The woman gave of her best.
 - Some were indignant of her sacrifice, but their priorities were wrong.
 - Poverty will never be terminated in this world system.
3. The conspiracy of Judas as he plotted against Jesus (vv. 10, 11). See the notes at the end of Mark.
4. The Last Supper (14:12-25). See the notes above for more detail.
5. The Garden of Gethsemane (14:26-52). From this amazing incident, we can learn how best to deal with crisis in our lives. See notes below at the end of Mark.
6. The deceptive betrayal of Judas and arrest by the Romans (14:43-52). One can imagine the fear of seeing the Roman soldiers and a mob coming for you. Peter started to fight, pulled out his sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave. Jesus kept things in perspective by saying and believing that the event was God's plan, everything was going to schedule, even to the fulfillment of prophecy. The Old Testament prophecies that Jesus had in mind may have been Zechariah 13:7, or Isaiah 53:12. This, again, points to the importance of knowing the mind of God through the Bible, and exercising the power of faith.
7. Christ scorned the multitudes for their overkill. Why so many, coming under the cover of darkness, armed to the teeth to capture a harmless

teacher? His disciples deserted Him, and the young man who escaped naked may have been Mark, the writer of that Gospel.

D. THE TRIALS AND CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST (14:53 – chapter 15).

1. Christ's trial before Caiaphas (14:53-65). Many false witnesses were called, and their testimony discounted. Finally, out of exasperation, Caiaphas asked Jesus if He was the Messiah, "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One" (v. 61). Jesus answered in the affirmative, and even said He had to power to judge all humanity – placing Himself on a par with God. Horrified, Caiaphas roared the claim was blasphemy (v. 64), which means he understood Christ to be claiming to be God. Jesus also quoted two Old Testament references to clearly identify who He was: Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.
2. Peter's denial (14:66-72). As Jesus predicted, Peter denied Him three times before the rooster crowed twice (v. 72). Satan was also at play in this particular scene of the passion play (Cf. Luke 22:31, 32). In the weakness of the flesh, Peter stumbled and fell before Satan's stratagem, but Christ interceded and later greatly used Peter.
3. Christ before Pilate (15:1-15). Pilate was the Roman appointed governor for Judea. Tiberius appointed him to that position in A.D. 26. He has jurisdiction over the Roman occupying army, collected the taxes, appointed the high priests, and presided in cases of capital punishment. The latter is why the Jewish leaders had to bring Jesus to Pilate, because he could pass the death sentence. Four things can be noted.
 - The Jews delivered Jesus up because of envy (v. 10).
 - The Jews demanded death (v. 13).
 - Pilate found Jesus to be innocent of any criminal charge (v. 14).
 - Political expedience overruled justice, and Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (v. 15).
4. Christ abused by Roman soldiers (15:16-20).
5. Christ crucified (15:21-32). The pain, brutality, rejection, mockery, was hurled at Christ, which was part of the penalty of our sin.
6. Christ died (33-41). Jesus gave up His life (v. 37), and the Roman centurion uttered the words that, indeed, Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus' women followers were observing from a distance. A centurion was a Roman officer in charge of 100 troops.
7. Christ was entombed (15:42-47). Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin Council, and was a secret believer in Christ, as he was awaiting the kingdom (v. 43). He summoned courage to ask Pilate for the body. He provided fine linen for burial clothes. Nicodemus (also a

member of the Council: John 3:1) also contributed expensive ointments to anoint Christ's body (John 19:39). The women followers of Christ also contributed much to His burial (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). They placed Jesus in a cave tomb, and rolled a large stone in front of the opening.

V. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION (Chapter 16).

A. CHRIST'S EMPTY TOMB (vv. 1-8). Some women approached the grave, but found the stone rolled away, and an angel there to tell them Christ had risen from the dead. They were to go tell the disciples, who had scattered and were in hiding. The women were amazed, and we can still see the interplay between the spiritual and physical world.

B. CHRIST'S APPEARANCES.

1. To Mary Magdalene (vv. 9-11).
2. To the disciples on the road to Emmaus (vv. 12, 13).
3. To the eleven disciples (v. 11).

C. CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION (vv. 15-18).

1. We are to be about preaching the gospel of Christ to everyone everywhere. That is the main business of the Church and Christians.
2. Baptize may refer to Spirit baptism (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). Water baptism does not save anyone. It is simply the outward sign of an inward transformation, which is the spiritual rebirth (cf. John 3:3-8). Baptism, in that culture, was a formal rite converts participated in to publicly identify with a group. Spirit baptism is being spiritually joined to the body of Christ. Note also in this verse, that the cause of condemnation is unbelief (v. 16), not the absence of water baptism.

D. CHRIST'S ASCENSION (vv. 19, 20).

Christ ascended to His place of ruler ship at the right hand of God in heaven, and is now directing His followers in the spreading of the gospel throughout the world.

VI. EXTENDED NOTES

A. OBSERVATIONS ON JUDAS ISCARIOT.

People are always curious as to why do bad people do bad things. For example, what drives serial killers, child molesters, rapists, etc? Perhaps we can gain some insight by looking at the life of the great betrayer, Judas Iscariot. Following are several observations and suggestions as to why Judas did what he did. Judas was motivated by greed. He betrayed Jesus for money.

Judas was a thief who robbed the group's money (John 12:6).

Judas only pretended to care for the poor (John 12:6). Evidently, he diverted funds designated to assist poor people to his own personal use.

Judas was energized by Satan, who used Judas' character defects to accomplish his evil intentions (John 13:2, 27). There was no conscious (on Judas' part) conspiracy between Satan and Judas. Satan was working behind the scene, with the knowledge and permission of God, to arrange events, appeal to motives, and direct the great deception. Judas was unaware of Satan's strategy – a strategy God was using to fulfill prophecy (v. 49). John and Luke write that Satan entered Judas (John 13:27; Luke 22:3).

The motive of Judas is not clear. Once he realized his betrayal of Jesus would lead to His death, Judas felt remorse, returned the money, and hanged himself. It has been suggested that perhaps Judas wanted to force Jesus to establish the kingdom; thus, Judas would receive power and prestige in the kingdom. Surely greed was partly a motive, as Judas asked to Pharisees, *"What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?"* (Matthew 26:15).

The 30 pieces of silver he received (Matthew 26:15) is not specifically identified. It could have represented five weeks or more salary. The amount is prophesied in Zachariah 11:12. Perhaps in the final analysis, as to why people do the evil things they do, when satanic motives become involved, reason departs. For example, James wrote that bitter jealousy and selfish ambition along with arrogance and discarding the truth is demonic wisdom (James 3:14, 15, 16). Satan also blinds the minds of unbelievers, and deceives Christians (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3).

Judas was an unsaved man (John 17:12; Mark 14:21).

Judas' actions fulfill Psalm 41:9.

Judas' end in this life was suicide (Matthew 27:5).

B. FACING TROUBLE IN LIFE: The Garden of Gethsemane.

The story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is a story filled with deep human emotion during a gigantic crisis in the life of Christ. We can learn from Jesus' example.

The scene of the Garden of Gethsemane was Jesus preparing for the torturous events about to unfold in His life: the crucifixion. Jesus experienced deep, painful human emotions: He was distressed, troubled, and deeply grieved (vv. 33, 34). These words indicate that Jesus was astonished with amazement, at the experience He was about to encounter. The word for "distress" indicates a change in one's normal situation to such an extent that the person is thrown into a state of surprise and fear. He was "troubled," or depressed of mind, and overwhelmed by sorrow. Jesus was full of heavy grief. In sum, Jesus was in a state of deep, emotional despair – even to the point of death (v. 34).

The source of His distress was the horrifying, dreadful torment of the crucifixion, and all the gruesome experiences that accompanied that ghastly, gristly event.

The conflict within Him was that He was repulsed at the fast approaching horror. Here was the temptation facing Him: doing what was right, though it would be agonizing, or balking at the ordeal, which would evade the distress and pain. The latter would be sin, the disobedience to the Father's will. The writer of Hebrews states that Jesus "endured" the cross, and "despised" the shame, rejection, and pain that went with it (Hebrews 12:2).

Part of the "cup" (Mark 14:36) was the contact of His sinless soul with the sin of humanity with the resultant separation from God the Father (cf. Matthew 27:46). Jesus had never before experienced sin, nor had He ever been separated from the Father. There is also another dimension of the cross that we humans cannot understand. It is there that Jesus took on for all time, all the eternal suffering due to all humanity as a penalty for all sin (Hebrews 10:10, 12, 14). It is there that Jesus took away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

This does not mean that all people will be saved, because only those who believe will be saved (John 3:16). What it does mean, however, is that Jesus' suffering on the cross had the "value" of paying the entire penalty for all the sin of all humanity for all time and eternity. The actual application of that sufficient suffering is given only to the elect, or those who believe (John 1:12, 13).

We can keep this fact in mind when we face what to us are overwhelming troubles: in Christ, we are fully and forever forgiven for all the penalty of all the sins we have ever committed, are committing now, or ever will commit.

We are all faced with various temptations daily. We humans are plagued with temptation. We sin out of ignorance, weakness of the flesh, and outright obstinacy. Many times we face heart break, fear, depression, and sorrow in our hearts. Jesus said, "*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Mark 14:38). We can look to Jesus' example for help in handling those grievous events in our lives. Then, how did Jesus respond?

1. First, He had a habit of doing right. He had trained His character. He did not sin in the face of temptation (2 Corinthians 5:21), but resisted sin (Hebrews 12:4). Though He was God, and could not sin, Jesus, in His human nature, was faced with genuine earth bound temptation (Hebrews 4:15). He understands the troubles we face during our life.
2. Second, He was motivated by the future joy, reward, and ease of conscience that accompanies doing the right things. We have all heard of those who have committed a crime, then because of a guilty conscience, they confess the crime in later years. Doing the right thing avoids the shame and guilt that rides alongside sin.
3. Third, Jesus viewed things from God's point of view. His focus was not on the pain of the moment, and His personal comfort. He could see and understand God's plan. This points to our deep need to know the Bible,

because that is the only place we can view and understand God's viewpoint, values, plans, compassion, and correction. By seeing things from God's point of view, we correct our perspective. For example, our problems might seem insurmountable, horrible, and never ending. However, when seen from the point of view of a loving, compassionate, forgiving, correcting God who controls all things, then our problems are reduced in size, become manageable, and we can make sense out of things. (Cf. Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28).

4. Fourth, Jesus believed God's viewpoint and plan was true. In other words, the basic thing that gave Him strength was faith and trust in the goodness of God and His will. Jesus even asked the Father to change the plan, but in the end, He surrendered to God's will (Mark 14:36).
5. Fifth, Jesus prayed intensely. He poured out His heart to God the Father. He confided the innermost secrets, weaknesses, and yearnings to the Father. He held nothing back. Jesus spent hours in prayer. Prayer gave Him the faith and strength to face the largest hurdle ever faced in the history of humanity. He even scolded His disciples for their lack of prayer. His prayer and faith calmed His heart, and filled it with courage to face the future.

C. NOTES ON ANTI-SEMITISM.

We are confronted, in this time, with the reality of anti-Semitism. It seems like the world hates the Jews. The Christian should avoid anti-Semitism. One must be aware that not all Jews or Jewish religious leaders sought to kill or harm Jesus. He had many who believed in him. For example, Nicodemus (John 3:1; 19:39), and Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:42-47). He had many who believed in Him. In fact, 3,000 Jews became Christians at the first evangelistic sermon that Peter held (Acts 2:41). Jesus was a Jew. All His Apostles were Jews. All the writers of the New Testament, excepting Luke, were Jews. God has promised to bless those who bless the Jews, and curse the ones who do not (Genesis 12:3). We would do well to support Israel, and be friends with the Jews.

D. JOSEPHUS AND JESUS

Flavius Josephus (about A.D. 37-100) was a wealthy Jew, and extraordinary good historian. He was not a friend of Christianity. His lot in life was to defend and justify Judaism to the cultured and politically powerful Romans. Many Jews regarded him as a traitor, because of his friendliness to Rome, but more importantly for his belief that the Jews could not win in their war against Rome, which started in A.D. 66. He sought to stop the rebellion. He lived through the time when Rome destroyed Jerusalem (A.D. 70), and scattered the Jews.

Josephus, at the start of the Jewish wars, was a commander of a Jewish military unit, was defeated and captured by the Romans, and soon became the interpreter and mediator for the Roman General, Titus, in his march against

Jerusalem. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Josephus traveled to Rome with Titus where he lived on an imperial pension, and even became a Roman citizen. There he wrote his histories of the Jewish people.

The importance of the highly respected Josephus to Christianity is that his histories are very accurate, and write of the time of the birth and initial growth of Christianity. It is a valid and invaluable historical and cultural record of this time from an extra-biblical source, and from one who had little interest in defending Christianity.

Josephus wrote of several New Testament characters involved in the start of Christianity: John the Baptist, James the Just, and Jesus Christ. Of John the Baptist he wrote, "Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist".²⁶

Josephus wrote of James, the brother of Jesus Christ. He described how the high priest, Ananus, plotted to murder James. Josephus reported, "Festus now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he (Ananus) assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James...."²⁷ James was delivered to be stoned to death, an event spoken of in very negative terms by Josephus.

A most central and controversial record by Josephus is that of Jesus Christ as cited below.

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.²⁸

Skeptics claim that the writing was added later, possibly by the church historian, Eusebius (About A.D. 324), and was not from Josephus. It would be in their interest to discount any extra-biblical reference to Christ.

²⁶ Josephus, Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, book 18, chapter five, section two.

²⁷ Josephus, Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, book 20, chapter nine, section one.

²⁸ Flavius Josephus, in William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, (New York: H.L. Burt Company, Publishers, n.d.), p. 443.

The disputed section may have been altered somewhat by Eusebius, in particular the references that specifically refer to Christian doctrine: i.e. Christ being Messiah, something other than a man, and His resurrection. It is widely accepted, however, that Josephus wrote the passage about John the Baptist and James the brother of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, it must be conceded that Josephus wrote something about Jesus in the disputed passage, and that he was very aware of the claimed Deity of Christ, His resurrection, and Old Testament prophecies. Those are central doctrines of Christianity, and the message propagated by the early Christian church. And, it must be remembered that Josephus lived within the cultural and historical context of the birth and explosive expansion of the church. He was a Jew, a Pharisee, the son of a priest, a member of the inner circle of Jewish aristocracy who had to have had first hand exposure to the tensions between Judaism and the Christianity.

For example, in his defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-29), the Apostle Paul clearly outlined these central doctrines. In addressing the King, Paul concluded with, "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). The defense was made in a huge auditorium with many observers. I would also add that at this exact time Josephus was a 22 year old man rising quickly in rank within the Jewish leadership. His home was Jerusalem, which was about a two day journey away, and was a hot bed for Jewish Christian controversy.

To my mind, in the final analysis, Josephus wrote what was true. He was an honest historian that was writing accurate history. Christ was murdered for His claims to be Messiah. He was resurrected from the dead. Josephus rejected as false the plot that he knew was trumped up by the chief priests to deny Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:11-15). In fact, Josephus' father was a priest, and possible in on the plot – or at least had an insider's knowledge of it! In place of the myth, Josephus wrote accurate history as it happened. This does not mean that he personally accepted Christ as his Savior, but he did believe the facts of history. His historical accounts dovetail consistently with the biblical text. And, regarding his salvation, that is up to God.

One assumption by those who deny the authenticity of the passage in question is that Josephus could not have written those passages about Christ being the Messiah and the resurrection because he was a Jew. He would not be writing things contrary to his Jewish faith, they say. However, as a meticulous historian, how could he not write the truth? Besides, he was writing these accounts when he was safe in Rome away from the wrath of his fellow Jews and after the Jewish wars.

As a final note, I wish to draw some connections between Josephus, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Josephus, while a young man, acquainted himself with the ways of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He also spent three years training with a religious hermit who was similar to John the Baptist, and was possibly a disciple of John. Josephus writes, “but when I was informed that one, whose name was Banus, lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, both by night and by day, in order to preserve his chastity, I imitated him in those things”.²⁹ Sound familiar to John the Baptist (Cf. Mark 1:4-6)?

Stay with me as I connect some more dots. Josephus joined with Banus in about A.D. 53. Now, during that time there were still many, scattered disciples of John the Baptist. Luke records that Apollos, from Alexandria, was acquainted only with the baptism of John (Acts 18:24, 25). He also records that Paul also found disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-6). Here is where the connections begin to emerge. The appearance of these disciples of John the Baptist was during Paul’s third missionary journey. The years were A.D. 53-57. This is roughly the same time when Josephus was with Banus.

We must remember that John the Baptist and Jesus were first cousins, and grew up together. John Baptized Jesus at the start of His ministry. If Josephus, then, was at the feet of Banus, a probably disciple of John the Baptist, then he would have a positive outlook on Jesus of Nazareth. It is circumstantial data, admittedly, but the facts are this: the time frame, geographical proximity, and common personal relationships place Josephus very close to Christianity, the Apostle Paul, leaders of the Church, and eyewitness of Jesus Christ.

Another factor to consider is that Palestine is not a very big place. Depending on how you measure it, Palestine is only about 200 miles by 100 miles. People know each other. Another example, Josephus could have been an eye-witness to the death of James, the brother of Jesus. But, the year was the start of the Jewish wars in A.D. 66, and Josephus had assumed a military command in Galilee. Perhaps he did not witness the stoning of James.

What can we conclude? In this man’s opinion, Josephus wrote accurate, fair history, and his writings confirm and compliment the record of the New Testament. Josephus and his writings are of great value to understanding a greater understanding of the life and times of early Christianity.

D. NOTES ON DEMONS.

God created the entire complete angelic company probably at the start of the first day of creation (Job 38:4-7; Colossians 1:16; Exodus 20:11). Angels do not reproduce (Matthew 22:30), nor do they die (Luke 20:36). They are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14), and don’t have bodies (Luke 24:39 cf. Hebrews 1:14), yet they

²⁹ *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, section two.

can assume bodies (Genesis 18:1-19). They are divided into various orders with specific rankings (Ephesians 1:21; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15).

Demons may be fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion, and are now his servants (Matthew 12:26, 27). Some fallen angels are bound in a special prison called Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The work of demons is very specific.

1. They are bodiless spirits who desire bodies (Mark 5:1-13).
2. They are many in number (Luke 8:30).
3. They can cause physical and mental illness (Matthew 17:15, 18). A word of caution is in order: demons do not cause all physical and mental illness.
4. They can cause personal injury (Luke 9:38, 42).
5. They can possess people (Matthew 8:28).
6. They can possess animals (Matthew 8:29-32).
7. They can lead one into moral impurity (1 Timothy 4:1-3).
8. They give out false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1).
9. They can perform miracles (Revelation 13:12-15).
10. They promote idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:20).
11. They function in human government (Daniel 10:13-20).
12. They are associated with mediums, spiritualists, some clergymen (Acts 16:16-18; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

It is uncertain whether demons can now be exorcised by people. The reason: if Christians are to exorcise demons, then why are not specific instructions given (on either technique or even the command to do so) somewhere in the epistles, which are the particular documents written to the church on how to conduct its affairs. In the epistles there are many sections of Scripture where specific instructions are given on spiritual warfare, but they do not mention exorcism (e.g. Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Peter 5:8-10; James 3:13-15; 7:7; Ephesians 4:27; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15).

It is unlikely that Christians can be possessed by demons. Some distinguish between "possession," which refers to bodily invasion, and "oppression," which refers to an external harassment. It is clear, however, that Christians can be targeted, tempted, and influenced by demons, and that we have very specific spiritual weaponry with which to fight and become victorious. The final destination of demons is the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10-15).

Furthermore, Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 11); consequently, how could the Holy Spirit and a demon occupy the same body? Evidently, believers can be placed under the punishment of Satan as a consequence of sin, or for testing to accomplish the will of God (Luke 22:31, 32; Job 1:6-12; 1 Corinthians 5:5).

With this, end our brief excursion through the life of Jesus Christ as reported by Mark in his Gospel. We have examined some introductory issues, and followed

the life of Christ in His preparation, Galilean ministry; Christ's closing ministry, His passion and death, and His resurrection and ascension.

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Dr. Willis Newman

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