

1. (75)
A SAMARITAN VILLAGE and WOULD BE
FOLLOWERS

Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 9:51-62

You will remember that Jesus had been going back and forth across the Sea of Galilee and making short visits beyond Galilee.

You will also remember that He was avoiding the crowds and was spending much time in teaching His disciples.

Finally, however, the time drew near for Him to be taken up (to heaven), so Jesus started out for Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).

He traveled south by way of Samaria, sending messengers on ahead to make arrangements for Him and the disciples.

The messengers came into a Samaritan village where antagonism toward the children of Israel was high. The people of that village were unwilling to receive Jesus into their village, because He and His followers were going toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:53).

Two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, considered it to be an affront that the Samaritans would not receive them, and they asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them" (Luke 9:54 NIV)?

At this, Jesus turned toward James and John and rebuked the two of them (Luke 9:55).

Then Jesus and His disciples simply went on their way to another village.

As they were walking along the road, a man made a bold assertion. He said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go” (Luke 9:57 NIV).

[It is difficult to get the chronology of this incident sorted out, because the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 8:18-22) appears to describe it as happening earlier, but it should be remembered that the first part of Matthew is not strictly chronological.]

Matthew tells us that this man was a “scribe;” that is, an expert in the Law of Moses (Matthew 8:19).

Jesus did not reject the scribe as a possible disciple, but He warned him that his bold commitment might involve more than he (the scribe) realized. Jesus said to him,

“Foxes have holes
and birds of the air have nests,
but the Son of Man has no place
to lay his head.”

Luke 9:58 NIV

From this we note that Jesus was still collecting followers. In fact, He said to another man,

“Follow me.”

Luke 9:59 NIV

This man was willing to follow Jesus, but he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father” (Luke 9:59). To which Jesus replied,

“Let the dead bury their own dead,

but you go and proclaim
the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:60 NIV

Still another man volunteered, “I will follow you,
Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my
family” (Luke 9:61 NIV).

To this Jesus replied,

“No one who puts his hand to the plow
and looks back
is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:62

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jesus unwilling to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village, as James and John had wanted (Luke 9:54)? What do you think?
2. What did Jesus imply by saying, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58 NIV)?
3. Did the man, who wanted to go and bury his father, make a reasonable request? What did Jesus mean when He told the man, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60 NIV)? What was the reason for the urgency? Is there still a reason for urgency?

4. Why is a person, who puts his hand to the plow and looks back not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62)? What do you think?

2. (76)
SEVENTY-TWO SENT OUT and WOES TO
GALILEAN CITIES

Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 10:1-16

After Jesus left Galilee, He worked in Judea in the same way He had in Galilee. He selected seventy-two (some Bibles say seventy) additional disciples and sent them out, two-by-two, to the places where He Himself intended to go (Luke 10:1).

Before Jesus sent them out, however, He repeated for them much of what He had said to the Twelve (Matthew 10:1-42). He said,

“The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few.
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers into his harvest field.”
Luke 10:2 NIV

Jesus warned the Seventy-two that their work could be dangerous. He said to them,

“Go!
I am sending you out like lambs
among wolves.”

Luke 10:3 NIV

He cautioned them, as He had cautioned the Twelve (Matthew 10:9-10), to go just as they were and not take anything with them, saying,

“Do not take a purse or bag or sandals;
and do not greet anyone on the road.”

Luke 10:4 NIV

Concerning where they should stay in the towns into which they would come, He said,

“When you enter a house,
first say, ‘Peace to this house.’
If a man of peace is there,
your peace will rest on him;
if not, it will return to you.
Stay in that house,
eating and drinking
whatever they give you,
for the worker deserves his wages.
Do not move around from house to house.”

Luke 10:5-7 NIV

The Seventy-two were to be content with what people gave them to eat. He said,

“When you enter a town
and are welcomed,
eat what is set before you.

Luke 10:8 NIV

In describing the work that the Seventy-two should do on their mission, He said,

“Heal the sick who are there
and tell them,
‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”

Luke 10:9 NIV

Concerning what they should do if any town would not welcome them, He said,

“But when you enter a town
and are not welcomed,
go into its streets and say,
‘Even the dust of your town
that sticks to our feet
we wipe off against you.
Yet be sure of this:
The kingdom of God is near.’”

Luke 10:10-11 NIV

It will not go well in the Judgment with any town that refused to welcome His messengers. He said,

“I tell you,
it will be more bearable on that day
for Sodom than for that town.”

Luke 10:12 NIV

He spoke of some of the towns in Galilee, which had not repented when He taught and performed miracles in them. He said,

“Woe to you, Korazin!
Woe to you, Bethsaida!
For if the miracles
that were performed in you
had been performed in Tyre and Sidon,
they would have repented long ago,
sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
But it will be more bearable
for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment
than for you.”

Luke 10:13-14 NIV
(See also Matthew 11:21-22)

Also concerning Capernaum, His adopted hometown,
Jesus said,

“And you, Capernaum,
will you be lifted up to the skies?
No, you will go down to the depths.”

Luke 10:15 NIV
(See also Matthew 11:23-24)

Then He said,

“He who listens to you
listens to me;

he who rejects you
rejects me;
but he who rejects me
rejects him who sent me.”

Luke 10:16 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus not want His disciples, whom He sent out on the two limited commissions to take any personal belongings with them?
2. Why did Jesus not want the Seventy-two to greet anyone along the road (Luke 10:4)? Does 2 Kings 4:14-29 suggest an answer to you? What does it suggest?
3. Why did Jesus not want the Twelve (Luke 9:4) or the Seventy-two (Luke 10:7) to move about from house to house? What do you think?
4. Why will it not go well with Korazin and Bethsaida in the Judgment (Luke 10:13-14)? Why will Capernaum be punished instead of praised (Luke 10:15)? What do you think?

3. (77)

THE RETURN OF THE SEVENTY-TWO

Matthew 11:25-30; Luke 10:17-24

After Jesus' Seventy-two disciples had completed their mission, they returned with joy. They said to Jesus, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17).

Jesus was glad, no doubt, that demons had been subject to the Seventy-two, but He did not seem surprised by it, for He said,

"I saw Satan fall
like lightning from heaven."

Luke 10:18 NIV

Continuing to speak to the Seventy-two, He said,

"I have given you authority
to trample on snakes and scorpions
and to overcome all the power of the enemy;
nothing will harm you."

Luke 10:19 NIV

He warned them that the possession of such authority was not the true reason for them to rejoice. He said,

"However, do not rejoice
that the spirits submit to you,
but rejoice

that your names are written in heaven."

Luke 10:20 NIV

In spite of the suffering that was awaiting Him at Jerusalem, Jesus did not act sad and gloomy. He rejoiced with the very special joy that came to Him by the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21a).

At that moment, He was overcome with an awareness of how wonderfully God had arranged things and spoke a quick prayer expressing His appreciation, saying,

“I praise you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have hidden these things
from the wise and learned,
and revealed them to little children.
Yes, Father,
for this was your good pleasure.”

Luke 10:21b NIV

Then He gave His followers some insight into His own personal relationship with the Father. He said,

“All things
have been committed to me by my Father.
No one knows who the Son is
except the Father,
and no one knows who the Father is
except the Son
and those to whom the Son
chooses to reveal him.”

Luke 10:22 NIV

Jesus' close relationship with the Father made it possible for Him to issue an invitation to those that needed His help. He said,

“Come to me,
all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28 NIV

Jesus spoke specifically about how He could help people. He said,

“Take my yoke upon you
and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
Matthew 11:29-30 NIV

Jesus then turned to His disciples and reminded them privately of how blessed they were. He said,

“Blessed are the eyes that see
what you see.
For I tell you that many prophets and kings
wanted to see what you see
but did not see it,
and to hear what you hear

but did not hear it.”

Luke 10:23-24 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. To whom did Jesus give authority to drive out demons? Did He give it to all of His followers or only to the Twelve (Matthew 10:8) and the Seventy-two (Luke 10:19)?
2. Jesus praised (or thanked) God that God had hidden certain things from wise and learned men and had revealed them to little children (Luke 10:21). What are some of the things that God has hidden from wise and learned men but revealed to little children?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said that all things had been committed to Him by His Father (Luke 10:22)? Please, name a few of the things that have been committed to Jesus.
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that no one knows who the Son is, except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is, except the Son (Luke 10:22)?
5. What is the purpose of putting a yoke on an animal? Is the yoke designed to hurt the animal or to help it pull its load? Can a person learn from Jesus without taking up His “yoke?” What do you think?
6. What was it that Jesus’ immediate followers saw, which prophets and kings had wanted to see, but did not see (Luke 10:24)? Perhaps, the passage in 1 Peter 1:10 will help you find an answer.

4. (78)
THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN
Luke 10:25-37

There was a certain lawyer, who wanted to test Jesus, so he asked Him, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life” (Luke 10:25)?

Jesus responded by asking the lawyer,

“What is written in the law?
What is your reading of it?”

Luke 10:26 NKJV

The lawyer answered by reciting Deuteronomy 6:5, which says,

“Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your strength...”

Luke 10:27a NIV

The lawyer also quoted from Leviticus 19:18, which says, “And ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27c NIV).

It is not clear whether the lawyer answered Jesus out of his own conviction or whether he was merely echoing Jesus’ teaching, in order to set Jesus up for an additional questions; but, be that as it may, Jesus said to him,

“You have answered right;
do this, and you will live.”

Luke 10:28 RSV

The lawyer rebutted with a question that he may have thought to be a tough question. He asked, “And who is my neighbor” (Luke 10:29 NIV)?

In response, Jesus told a parable about an Israelite, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and who fell into the hands of robbers. The robbers stripped the Israelite of his clothes and beat him. They then went on their way, leaving him half-dead (Luke 10:30).

Now, it happened that one of the priests of the children of Israel happened to be going down that same road and saw the wounded man, but the priest did not stop and help his fellow-countryman. Instead, he passed by on the other side of the road (Luke 10:31).

Next, a Levite came by that way. He also saw the wounded man. He, too, passed by on the other side, without helping him (Luke 10:32).

A foreigner, however, a Samaritan that was traveling, came to the wounded Israelite, saw him, and took pity on him. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, and poured oil and wine on them. He then set the wounded man on his own donkey and led him to an inn, where he took care of him (Luke 10:33-34).

The next day, the Samaritan took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Look after him and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have had” (Luke 10:35).

After Jesus had finished His story, He asked the lawyer,

“Which of these three
do you think
was a neighbor to the man
who fell into the hands of robbers?”

Luke 10: 36 NIV

To his credit, the lawyer replied, “The one who had mercy on him” (Luke 10:37a NIV).

At that, Jesus told the lawyer,

“Go and do likewise.”

Luke 10:37b

NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the lawyer was sincere or did he only wanted to trick Jesus into saying something wrong? What are the reasons for your thinking as you do?
2. The lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Did he consider that to be a difficult question? What do you think?
3. Which of the men in Jesus’ parable complied with the scripture that says, “Love your neighbor as yourself?” Was it the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan?

4. What can we learn from Jesus' parable? Who is our "neighbor?" Is our neighbor only the person that lives next door?

5. (79)

JESUS' VISIT WITH MARTHA AND MARY

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus came to the village in Judea, in which a certain woman named Martha and her sister, Mary, lived; and Martha opened her home to Jesus (Luke 10:38).

While Martha was busy with serving her guest (or guests), Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to what He had to say (Luke 10:39).

After a while, Martha came to Jesus and complained about Mary, saying, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the serving alone? Tell her to help me" (Luke 10:40)!

Jesus did not tell Mary to get up and help Martha, as Martha requested. Instead, He gently chided Martha, saying to her,

"Martha, Martha,
you are worried and upset
about many things,
but only one thing is needed."

Luke 10:41-42a

Concerning Mary, Jesus said,

“Mary has chosen the good part,
and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:42b

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Do you get the impression that Martha was older than Mary? What causes you to think as you do?
2. Do you think Jesus felt at home at Martha and Mary’s home? Do you think that Jesus was thankful for all the things that Martha did for Him?
3. Can we learn something from Martha’s example? What can we learn from her? Why did Jesus chide Martha? Was Martha doing something wrong? If so, what?
4. Jesus said, “but only one thing is needed” (Luke 10:41-42a). What is that “one thing?”
5. What can we learn from Mary? What is “the good part,” which Mary chose? How can we choose “the good part?” What do you think?
6. Would you like to become more like Mary or more like Martha? Please explain.

6. (80)

TEACHING ON PRAYER

Luke 11:1-13

In spite of His being very busy, Jesus did not forget to pray.

One day, after He had finished praying in a certain place in Judea, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1 NIV).

In response to their request, Jesus taught them a new prayer. It was similar to, but slightly different from, the prayer that He had taught them earlier in His Sermon on the Mount in Galilee (Matthew 6:9-13). He said to His disciples,

“When you pray, say:
‘Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone
who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.’”

Luke 11:2-4 NIV

Then, Jesus told His disciples a parable that illustrated the need for boldness in prayer. He told them about a man, who had no bread to set before a guest that had arrived very late to spend the night with him.

The man went to his neighbor and said, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him” (Luke 11:5-6 NIV).

The neighbor, from inside his house, said, “Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything” (Luke 11:7).

After telling the parable, Jesus made a comment on it. He said,

“I tell you,
though he will not get up
and give him the bread
because he is his friend,
yet because of the man’s boldness
he will get up and give him
as much as he needs”

Luke 11:8 NIV

To elaborate the lesson that should be drawn from this parable, Jesus said,

“So I say to you:
Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Luke 11:9 NIV

Then Jesus explained,

“For everyone who asks receives;
he who seeks finds;
and to him who knocks,
the door will be opened.”

Luke 11:10 NIV

To emphasize God's goodness and generosity to His children, Jesus said,

“Which of you fathers,
if your son asks for a fish,
will give him a snake instead?
Or if he asks for an egg,
will give him a scorpion?”

Luke 11:11-12 NIV

God's capacity for kindness far exceeds the capacity of any human father. Jesus said,

“If you then, though you are evil,
know how to give good gifts
to your children,
how much more will your Father in heaven
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Luke 11:13 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Which prayer do you like the best, the one in Matthew 6:9-13 or the one in Luke 11:2-4? Do you see any differences between them? If so, what are some of the differences?
2. Was either of these prayers (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4) intended to be used as a ritual? Is it better to

pray a memorized prayer or to pray what is on your heart?

3. Do you have the freedom sometimes to speak a memorized prayer when it expresses what is on your heart? What do you think?
4. Is it permissible to repeat a request to God over and over again? Is there any danger that our prayers might become a burden to Him? Please, explain.
5. Was Jesus' promise that God would answer prayers (Luke 11:9-10) given to everyone or only to God's children? Does God sometimes answer the prayers of people that are not His children? Does He always answer the prayers of His children? Please, elaborate.
6. Does God give the Holy Spirit to His children? See Luke 11:13.
7. Upon what conditions does God give the Holy Spirit to His children? See Acts 2:38-39. Would it do any good "to ask" God for the Holy Spirit if we did not intend to do what God has said? See Acts 5:32.

7. (81)

BEELZEBUB and THE SIGN OF JONAH (AGAIN)

Luke 11:14-36

Jesus encountered once again a man who had been robbed of his speech by a demon. So Jesus drove the demon out and the man spoke (Luke 11:14). The crowd that had witnessed the event was amazed, as people usually were, when they heard a dumb man speak.

However, some of the people in the crowd repeated a charge that had, by now, become commonplace among Jesus' opponents. They said that Jesus drove the demons out by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Luke 11:15).

Jesus responded to this charge in the same way that He had responded to it earlier in Galilee (Matthew 12:25-26; Mark 3:23-26). He said that if He drove out Satan by Satan, then Satan's house would be divided and Satan's kingdom would not stand (Luke 11:17-18).

It is not surprising that Jesus responded to this charge in the same way that He had responded to it earlier, for it was the perfect answer. Furthermore, a good teacher often repeats himself (or herself).

Jesus took this opportunity to tell people how they should think about His miracles. He said,

“But if I drive out demons
by the finger of God,
then the kingdom of God has come to you.”

Luke 11:20 NIV

People should have realized that Jesus' ability to drive out demons showed that He was stronger than Satan. Jesus said,

“When a strong man, fully armed,
guards his own house,
his possessions are safe.
But when someone stronger attacks
and overpowers him,
he takes away the armor
in which the man trusted
and divides up the spoils.”

Luke 11:21-22 NIV

When Jesus drove out demons, it did not indicate that He and the demons were working together. Rather, it indicated just the opposite.

In this connection, Jesus repeated something that He had said earlier in Galilee (Matthew 12:30). He said,

“He who is not with me
is against me,
and he who does not gather with me,
scatters.”

Luke 11:23 NIV

Again, Jesus repeated what He had said regarding evil spirits (Matthew 12:43-45), namely,

“When an evil spirit comes out of a man,
it goes through arid places seeking rest
and does not find it.

Then it says,

‘I will return to the house I left.’

When it arrives,

it finds the house swept clean
and put in order.

Then it goes and takes seven other spirits
more wicked than itself,
and they go in and live there.

And the final condition of that man
is worse than the first.”

Luke 11:24-26 NIV

While Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you” (Luke 11:27 NIV). Jesus corrected her, by saying,

“Blessed rather are those
who hear the word of God and obey it.”

Luke 11:28 NIV

Many of the people in the crowd had come only to see Jesus work a miracle. So He said, as He had said earlier (Matthew 12:39-42),

“This is a wicked generation.
It asks for a miraculous sign,
but none will be given it
except the sign of Jonah.”

Luke 11:29 NIV

Jonah, you will recall, had been able to save the people of Nineveh from destruction, because they believed his message and repented of their sins. So the question for Jesus' generation was, would Jesus be able to save them from destruction? It depended upon whether or not they, like the Ninevites, believed and repented. Jesus said,

“For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites,
so also will the Son of Man be
to this generation.”

Luke 11:30 NIV

Jesus warned that the Queen of Sheba would rise up at the Judgment and condemn the people of His generation. He said,

“...for she came
from the ends of the earth
to listen to Solomon’s wisdom,
and now one greater than Solomon is here.”

Luke 11:31b NIV

Jesus warned that also the people of Nineveh would rise up at the Judgment and condemn the people of His generation. He explained,

“...for they repented
at the preaching of Jonah,
and now one greater than Jonah is here.”

Luke 11:32b NIV

Jesus defended His speaking so openly and plainly, by saying,

“No one lights a lamp
and puts it in a place where it will be hidden,
or under a bowl.

Instead he puts it on its stand,

so that those who come in
may see the light.”

Luke 11:33 NIV

Jesus implied that the people who could not see the
light of His message were blind, saying,

“Your eye is the lamp of your body.
When your eyes are good,
your whole body also is full of light.
But when they are bad,
your body also is full of darkness.”

Luke 11:34 NIV

Then, Jesus admonished the people,

“See to it, then,
that the light within you is not darkness.
Therefore,
if your whole body is full of light,
and no part of it dark,
it will be completely lighted,
as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

Luke 11:35-36 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What conclusion should the people of Jesus' day have drawn from their seeing Jesus drive out demons? See Luke 11:20.
2. Jesus said that He would give the people of His generation "the sign of Jonah (Luke 11:29)." What was "the sign of Jonah?" How did Jesus give them "the sign of Jonah?" See Matthew 12:40.
3. What accusation will the Queen of Sheba (Luke 11:31) bring against the people of Jesus' generation on the Day of Judgment?
4. What accusation will the people of Nineveh (Luke 11:32) bring against the people of Jesus' generation in the Judgment?

8. (82)

EATING WITH UNWASHED HANDS and SIX WOES

Luke 11:37-54

As Jesus finished speaking to a crowd in Judea, one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him (Luke 11:37).

Jesus went with the Pharisee to his house and sat down to eat, and the Pharisee was surprised that Jesus did not wash His hands before the meal (Luke 11:38).

Jesus knew what the Pharisee was thinking and He began to criticize the Pharisees for over-emphasizing external things in general. Jesus said,

“Now then, you Pharisees clean
the outside of the cup and dish,
but inside
you are full of greed and wickedness.
You foolish people!
Did not the one who made the outside
make the inside also?”

Luke 11:39-40 NIV

Jesus told the Pharisees something they could do to become clean on the inside. He said,

“But give what is inside [the cup or dish]
to the poor,
and everything will be clean for you.”

Luke 11:41 NIV

Jesus then also pronounced three “woes” over the Pharisees. The first “woe” was pronounced because the Pharisees tithed mint, rue, and other garden herbs, but neglected justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42).

Jesus pronounced the second “woe” over the Pharisees, because they loved to sit in prominent places in

the synagogues and to be greeted in the marketplaces (Luke 11:43).

The third “woe” He pronounced over them, because they were, He said, like unmarked graves, over which people walked without knowing what was underneath (Luke 11:44).

One of the men that heard these words was a lawyer; and the lawyer replied to Jesus, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us, too.”

At that, Jesus pronounced a “woe” also over the lawyers; because they loaded people down with burdens that the people could hardly bare, while the lawyers themselves did not lift a finger to help them (Luke 11:46).

He pronounced an additional “woe” over the Pharisees and lawyers because they built tombs for the prophets, which their fathers had killed (Luke 11:47). The Pharisees and lawyers appeared to have been honoring the prophets by building tombs for them; but, actually, they were showing their approval of the works of their fathers (Luke 11:48). Furthermore, they were just as guilty as their fathers were, because they were planning to do away with Jesus.

Then Jesus said that the wisdom of God had foretold that the children of Israel would persecute the prophets and kill some of them (Luke 11:49).

He prophesied that the generation of people, among whom He lived, would be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets, saying,

“Therefore this generation
will be held responsible for the blood

of all the prophets
that has been shed
since the beginning of the world.”

Luke 11:50 NIV

Jesus then referred to the first and last of the righteous men, who were killed in Old Testament times. He referred to Abel (Luke 11:51a), who had been slain by Cain at the very beginning of Hebrew history (Genesis 4:8). And He also referred to Zechariah (Luke 11:51a), who was stoned on the temple grounds, as recorded in the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament (2 Chronicles 24:20-21).

Jesus said,

“Yes, I tell you, this generation
will be held responsible for it all.”

Luke 11:51b NIV

Jesus’ words may have been a warning of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem, which took place some 35 years after He spoke these words.

Jesus pronounced a final “woe” over the lawyers; for instead of helping people understand the Scriptures, they had closed the Scriptures to them. He said,

“Woe to you experts in the law,

because you have taken away

the key to knowledge.

You yourselves have not entered,

and you have hindered

those who were entering.”

Luke 11:52 NIV

The scribes and Pharisees could endure Jesus’ words no longer. So they turned fiercely against Him. They besieged Him with questions whenever they could, and they kept on trying to catch Him in something He might say (Luke 11:53).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus did not keep the tradition of washing His hands in a ceremonial way before eating, as the Pharisees did. Why do you suppose He did not keep that tradition?
2. Do you think Jesus spoke too harshly to the Pharisees and experts in the Law? Please elaborate. Should we speak plainly to people about the truth? Can we speak plainly without being unnecessarily offensive? What do you think?

3. God held the people of Jesus' generation (Luke 11:51) accountable for the deaths of all the prophets that had been killed. Were the people of Jesus' generation held accountable because they had a better opportunity to know the truth and to reform their lives than their fathers? What do you think?
4. If the people of Jesus' generation had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, would they have been spared the destruction that came upon their nation in AD 70? What do you think?
5. Do you think that some of today's so-called experts in the Scriptures "take away the key to knowledge" by their traditions, with the results that some people cannot understand the Scriptures? Please explain.

9. (83)

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' SPEECH TO A GREAT CROWD IN JUDEA

Luke 12:1-12

When a crowd of many thousands of people was gathered in Judea, Jesus began to speak to them.

Although He addressed His remarks to His disciples, He was teaching the crowd as well. Much of what He had to say on that day had been previously said to His disciples while they were still in Galilee.

For example, He had warned His disciples previously against the “yeast of the Pharisees” (Matthew 16:6). Now, He let people in general hear His warning, saying,

“Be on your guard against
the yeast of the Pharisees,
which is hypocrisy.”

Luke 12:1 NIV

With the following words, He assured His disciples (and people listening) that His message would continue to be spread. He said,

“There is nothing concealed
that will not be disclosed,
or hidden that will not be made known.
What you have said in the dark
will be heard in the daylight,
and what you have whispered in the ear
in the inner rooms
will be proclaimed from the roofs.”

Luke 12:2-3 NIV

Similar thoughts can be found in Matthew 10:26-27 and Luke 8:17.

Jesus did not want His disciples to be afraid of anything, except of disobeying God. He said to them,

“I tell you, my friends,
do not be afraid of those who kill the body
and after that can do no more.

But I will show you whom you should fear:
Fear him who,
after the killing of the body,
has power to throw you into hell.
Yes, I tell you, fear him.”

Luke 12:4-5 NIV

Words similar to these had been said by Jesus when He sent the Twelve out on their limited commission (Matthew 10:28).

Next, He assured His listeners of God’s great concern for them. He said,

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?
Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.
Indeed, the very hairs of your head
are all numbered.
Don’t be afraid;
you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Luke 12:6-7 NIV

Thoughts such as the above had been previously expressed (Matthew 10:29-31) and would be expressed yet again (Luke 21:18). They were a standard part of Jesus’ teaching.

He continued giving the crowd a synopsis of His sermons from the past, saying,

“I tell you,
whoever acknowledges me before men,
the Son of Man will also acknowledge him
before the angels of God.

But he who disowns me before men
will be disowned before the angels of God.”
Luke 12:8-9 NIV

This also echoes something that He had said earlier (Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, and Luke 9:26).

Then, He repeated a word of caution for the Pharisees and others, who were saying that Jesus drove demons out by the power of Beelzebub (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). He said,

“And everyone who speaks a word
against the Son of Man will be forgiven,
but anyone who blasphemes
against the Holy Spirit
will not be forgiven.”

Luke 12:10 NIV

Following that, Jesus assured His disciples that God would help them know what to say when they were called to give an account for their faith. He said,

“When you are brought before synagogues,
rulers and authorities,
do not worry about
how you will defend yourselves
or what you will say,
for the Holy Spirit will teach you
at that time what you should say.”

Luke 12:11 NIV

These words remind us of what Jesus said, as recorded in Matthew 10:19-20, and what He would say later, as recorded in Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:14-15.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus mentioned that someone, whom He did not specify, has the “power” to throw people into hell (Luke 12:5). Who has the power to throw people into hell? Is it God or is it Satan? What do you think?
2. How can a person learn not to be afraid of what people might do to him (or her)?
3. Jesus warned His disciples that if they should come to disown Him before men, they would be disowned before the angels of God (Luke 12:9). Who is it that will disown disciples who disown Jesus? See Matthew 10:32-33. When will this take place? See Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26.
4. Are you usually able to find something to say when people question you about your faith? Does a familiarity with the Scriptures help a person know what to say? What do you think?

10. (84)
PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL
Luke 12:13-34

As Jesus was speaking to His disciples and to a great crowd in Judea, a man in the crowd interrupted Him with a request. He said, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” (Luke 12:13). Jesus replied,

“Man,
who appointed me a judge
or an arbiter between you?”

Luke 12:14 NIV

Rather than help the man get some of his rightful inheritance, Jesus warned him not to be filled with greed.

Jesus said,

“Watch out!
Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;
a man’s life does not consist
in the abundance of his possessions.”

Luke 12:15 NIV

To illustrate how foolish it would be for anyone to concentrate on material possessions above all else, Jesus told a parable about a rich man, whose farms produced a good crop.

The rich man thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said to himself,

“This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry’” (Luke 12:18-19 NIV).

Jesus continued by saying, “But God said to him,

‘You fool!

This very night your life

will be demanded from you.

Then who will get

what you have prepared for yourself?’”

Luke 12:20 NIV

Then Jesus made a comment. He said,

“This is how it will be with anyone
who stores up things for himself
but is not rich toward God.”

Luke 12:21 NIV

After Jesus had taught the above parable, He warned His listeners, saying,

“Therefore I tell you,
do not worry about your life,
what you will eat;
or about your body,
what you will wear.
Life is more than food,
and the body more than clothes.”

Luke 12:22-23 NIV

Jesus had already cautioned His disciples not to worry about food and clothing (Matthew 6:25), but this may have been new to many in the crowd in Judea.

In addition, He repeated what He had taught earlier about the ravens (Matthew 6:26). He said,

“Consider the ravens:
They do not sow or reap,
they have no storeroom or barn;
yet God feeds them.

And how much more valuable you are
than birds!”

Luke 12:24 NIV

Jesus also asked, as He had done previously (Matthew
6:27),

“Who of you by worrying
can add a single hour to his life?”

Luke 12:25 NIV

Further, He asked,

“Since you cannot do this very little thing,
why do you worry about the rest?”

Luke 12:26 NIV

Jesus also mentioned the beauty of the flowers, as He
had done in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:28-
30), saying,

“Consider how the lilies grow.
They do not labor or spin.
Yet I tell you,
not even Solomon in all his splendor
was dressed like one of these.
If that is how God clothes

the grass of the field,
which is here today,
and tomorrow is thrown into the fire,
how much more will he clothe you,
O you of little faith!”

Luke 12: 27-28 NIV

Concerning food, Jesus said,

“And do not set your heart
on what you will eat or drink;
do not worry about it.”

Luke 12:29 NIV

Jesus’ attitude differed widely from the way most people thought (and think) about material things. He said,

“For the pagan world
runs after all such things,
and your Father knows that you need them.”

Luke 12:30 NIV

Then Jesus showed His confidence in God’s providence
by promising,

“But seek his [God’s] kingdom,
and these things will be given to you
as well.”

Luke 12:31 NIV

Jesus made yet another, even greater promise. He said,

“Do not be afraid, little flock,
for your Father has been pleased
to give you the kingdom.”

Luke 12:32 NIV

Following that, Jesus gave some advice, which not many
people are willing to heed. He said,

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor.
Provide purses for yourselves
that will not wear out,
a treasure in heaven
that will not be exhausted,
where no thief comes near
and no moth destroys.”

Luke 12:33 NIV

As if to justify His point of view, Jesus explained,

“For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.”

Luke 12:34 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus spoke of people that store up goods for themselves, but who are “not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). How does a person get to be rich toward God?
2. When Jesus said that we should not worry about food and clothing (Luke 12:24-30), did He mean that His followers should not work and provide for themselves and for their families? See 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. Is there a difference between providing for the future and worrying about the future?
3. Did Jesus promise that if we seek God’s kingdom, material things would be provided for us (Luke 12:31)? What does it mean to “seek God’s kingdom?” Does Luke 12:31 differ from Matthew 6:33? If so, how?
4. Jesus said, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Luke 12:33). Did Jesus mean for all of His followers to sell all of their possessions? What do you think?
5. Is there anything that Satan, or any evil person, could have done to thwart the establishment of the kingdom of which Jesus spoke in Luke 12:32? See Matthew 16:18.

11. (85)
BE READY!

Luke 12:35-48

In His long speech in Judea, Jesus began teaching His disciples about His Second Coming. Prior to this, He had only briefly alluded to His Second Coming (Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38).

Here, Jesus compared Himself to a royal bridegroom, who had gone away to get married and who will return to His servants. He cautioned His disciples to stand ready for His Second Coming just as royal servants await their Lord's return. He said,

“Be dressed ready for service
and keep your lamps burning,
like men waiting for their Lord to return
from a wedding banquet,
so that when he comes and knocks
they can immediately open the door
for him.”

Luke 12:35-36

Jesus promised that when He returns (after His ascension), His relationship with His followers will be changed, in that He will then serve them. He said,

“It will be good for those servants,
whose Lord finds them watching
when he comes.
I tell you the truth,
he will dress himself to serve,
will have them recline at the table

and will come and wait on them.”

Luke 12:37

They should be ready to receive their Lord no matter when He arrives, whether it be by day or by night; for Jesus said,

“And if he shall come in the second watch,
and if in the third,
and find (them) so,
blessed are those (servants).”

Luke 12:38 ASV

To illustrate that no one knows when Jesus will return, He compared His return to the coming of a thief. He said,

“But understand this:
If the owner of the house had known
at what hour the thief was coming,
he would not have let his house
be broken into.
You also must be ready,
because the Son of Man will come
at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Luke 12:39-40 NIV

Upon hearing these things, Peter was confused. He was not certain whether Jesus was referring to the disciples or to all the people. So Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone” (Luke 12:41 NIV)?

In response to Peter's question, Jesus asked Peter,

“Who then is the faithful and wise manager,
whom the Lord puts in charge
of His servants
to give them their food allowance
at the proper time?”

Luke 12:42

By asking this, Jesus implied that Peter knew (or could figure out) who the “faithful and wise steward” was.

Then Jesus said,

“Blessed is that servant,
whom his Lord when He comes
finds so doing.
Of a truth I say unto you,
that He will set him over all that He has.”

Luke 12:43-44

Next, Jesus described what would happen to a servant that abused his fellow servants, who were set under him. He said,

“But suppose the servant says to himself,
'My Lord is taking a long time in coming,'
and he then begins to beat the menservants
and maidservants
and to eat and drink and get drunk.

The Lord of that servant will come on a day
when he does not expect him
and at an hour he is not aware of.
He will cut him to pieces
and assign him a place with the
unbelievers.”

Luke 12:45-46

Jesus holds His servants accountable for their deeds.
He said,

“That servant who knows his Lord’s will
and does not get ready
or does not do what his Lord wants
will be beaten with many blows.”

Luke 12:47

It is possible, of course, that a follower of Jesus might
not know what the Lord expects of him. Concerning such
an eventuality, Jesus said,

“But the one who does not know
and does things deserving punishment
will be beaten with few blows.”

Luke 12:48a NIV

God expects everyone, however, to live up to his or
her capabilities and opportunities for service. Jesus said,

“From everyone who has been given much,
much will be demanded;

and from the one
who has been entrusted with much,
much more will be asked.”

Luke 12:48b NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What can a person do in order to be ready for the Lord's return?
2. Are you surprised that the Lord will serve His servants when He returns (Luke 12:37)? What does this tell you about the nature of God? What does this tell you about the future that is awaiting God's people?
3. When Jesus spoke of the “wise and faithful servant” (Luke 12:42) was He speaking only of Peter? Or was He speaking of everyone, to whom God gives a position of responsibility? What do you think?
4. Do you think this lesson about responsibility is only for leaders of a congregation or for all the members of a congregation, as well?

12. (86)

JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES WHAT IS RIGHT

Luke 12:49-59

Near the close of His long speech to the great crowd in Judea, Jesus expressed some of His personal feelings about His work. He said,

“I have come to bring fire on the earth,
and how I wish it were already kindled!”

Luke 12:49 NIV

Jesus knew that before the “fire” could be kindled, He would have to undergo a baptism of suffering, and He was in anguish until it was over with. He said,

“But I have a baptism to undergo,
and how distressed I am
until it is completed!”

Luke 12:50 NIV

Jesus was under no illusion as to the effect that His work would have. The “fire” of which He spoke would be a blessing for many people, but it would not be a unifying force in society. He asked,

“Do you think that I came
to bring peace on earth?
No, I tell you, but division.”

Luke 12:51 NIV

He knew specifically what the division would be like, and He described it, by saying,

“From now on

there will be five in one family
divided against each other,
three against two and two against three.”

Luke 12:52 NIV

To illustrate how complete the division in some families would be, Jesus quoted from the prophet Micah, as follows,

“They will be divided,
father against son and son against father,
mother against daughter
and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Luke 12:53 NIV (Micah 7:6)

This division would occur because not everyone would understand His message, in spite of the fact that many of them were otherwise very astute. To the Judeans He said,

“When you see a cloud rising in the west,
immediately you say,
‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does.
And when the south wind blows, you say,
‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is.”

Luke 12:54-55 NIV

This was similar to, but slightly different from what He had said to people in Galilee (Matthew 16:1-3), where climactic conditions were similar, but slightly different.

Even though climactic conditions differed between Judea and Galilee, people in both localities could predict the weather in their own locality; but they could not, as a whole, recognize that their Messiah was among them. For this He castigated them, saying,

“Hypocrites!
You know how to interpret
the appearance of the earth and the sky.
How is it that you don’t know
how to interpret this present time?”

Luke 12:56 NIV

Jesus wanted people to use the minds that God had given them, so they could come to right conclusions. He asked,

“Why don’t you judge for yourselves
what is right?”

Luke 12:57 NIV

Jesus also wanted people to arrive at a just settlement of disputes. He said,

“As you are going with your adversary
to the magistrate,
try hard to be reconciled to him on the way,
or he may drag you off to the judge,
and the judge turn you over to the officer,
and the officer throw you into prison.”

Luke 12:58 NIV

He warned,

“I tell you,
you will not get out
until you have paid the last penny.”
Luke 12:59 NIV

The verses in Luke 12:57-59 are similar to what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-26.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Please describe the “fire” (Luke 12:49) that Jesus brought to the earth. Was the “fire” fully kindled before Jesus had given His life? Are there signs that the “fire” is still burning? If so, what are some of the signs that it is still burning?
2. What was the “baptism” (Luke 12:50) that Jesus had yet to undergo?
3. How does Jesus cause divisions (Luke 12:51-53) among people? If a person finds himself (or herself) in a divided family, what can he (or she) do about it? What do you think?
4. Why do people find it so difficult to seek reconciliation with an adversary? What do you think?

REPENT OR PERISH and THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE

Luke 13:1-9

Jesus had just finished speaking to His disciples and others in a great crowd in Judea when some of the people present told him about certain Galileans, whom Pilate, the Roman governor, had killed. Pilate, for some reason, seems to have ordered the Galileans killed as they were offering sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus did not respond to this news as some of them may have expected; for He neither castigated Pilate for the atrocity nor expressed sympathy for the people that were killed. Instead, He asked,

“Do you think that these Galileans
were worse sinners
than all the other Galileans
because they suffered this way?”

Luke 13:2 NIV

Jesus answered His own question, by saying,

“I tell you, no!
But unless you repent,
you too will all perish.”

Luke 13:3 NIV

As we see, Jesus did not challenge the idea that people are punished in this life for the sins that they commit.

Rather, He warned His listeners that they ought to change their ways.

He reminded them of the eighteen people, who had died when the tower fell on them in Siloam. Concerning them Jesus also asked,

“Do you think they were more guilty
than all the others living in Jerusalem?”

Luke 13:4b NIV

Jesus answered this question, too. He answered it the same way that He had answered the other question that He had asked. He said,

“I tell you, no!
But unless you repent,
you too will all perish.”

Luke 13:5 NIV

Jesus then told the Parable about a Fig Tree, in which a fig tree seems to represent the people of Israel (as in Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus said,

“A man had a fig tree,
planted in his vineyard,
and he went to look for fruit on it,
but did not find any.”

Luke 13:6 NIV

This was not the first time that the owner of the vineyard in Jesus' parable had come looking for fruit on his fig tree but did not find any. So the owner told his vinedresser,

“For three years now
I've been coming to look for fruit
on this fig tree and haven't found any.”
Luke 13:7b NIV

The owner decided that the fig tree was useless, so he told his vinedresser,

“Cut it down!
Why should it use up the soil?”
Luke 13:7c NIV

The vinedresser, however, thought that the tree could possibly be saved, so he intervened and said,

“Sir, let it alone this year also,
until I dig around it and fertilize it.”
Luke 13:8 NKJV

The vinedresser continued,

“If it bears fruit next year, fine!
If not, then cut it down.”
Luke 13:9 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus said to His listeners that they would all perish unless they repented (Luke 13:3,5). Was He referring to the destruction that He knew was coming upon the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, unless they changed their way of living? Or was He referring to the fact that everyone that does not repent will be punished at the Last Judgment? What do you think?
2. What does Jesus' Parable of the Fig Tree teach? Does it teach that God is waiting for each of us to bear fruit? What kind of fruit does God want His people to bear?
3. Does God often delay punishment in order to give us time to change our ways before disaster strikes? What do you think?

14. (88)

THE HEALING OF A WOMAN WHO WAS NEARLY BENT OVER DOUBLE and THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Luke 13: 10-21

As Jesus was teaching on a Sabbath day in one of the synagogues in Judea, there was a woman present who was nearly bent over double and could not straighten up. She had been in that condition for eighteen years, due to the influence of an evil spirit (Luke 13:10-11).

Jesus saw her and called her to Himself and said to her,

“Woman,
you are set free
from your infirmity.”

Luke 13:12b NIV

Then Jesus laid His hands on the woman and she was made to straighten up immediately and praised God (Luke 13:13).

Yet, the ruler of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her. He was indignant because Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath.

Instead of criticizing Jesus, however, the ruler of the synagogue criticized the people, and indirectly, the

woman. He said, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath” (Luke 13:14b NIV).

The Lord, in turn, criticized the ruler of the synagogue. (Notice that Luke, who recorded this story, calls Jesus here “Lord.”) The Lord said,

“You hypocrites!
Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath
untie his ox or donkey from the stall
and lead it out to give it water?”

Luke 13:15 NIV

Jesus was right, of course; for even the ruler of the synagogue would lead his donkey out to drink water on the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus asked,

“Then should not this woman,
a daughter of Abraham,
whom Satan has kept bound
for eighteen long years,
be set free on the Sabbath day
from what bound her?”

Luke 13:16 NIV

When Jesus said this, all His opponents were humiliated; but the people that had witnessed this healing rejoiced over the many praiseworthy things that were happening through Jesus (Luke 13:17).

Such praiseworthy things were, however, only the beginning of the great things they would see. Jesus asked,

“What is the kingdom of God like?
What shall I compare it to?
It is like a mustard seed,
which a man took and planted in his garden.
It grew and became a tree,
and the birds of the air
perched in its branches.”

Luke 13:18-19 NIV

With this parable Jesus predicted the growth of the size of His kingdom.

He next predicted that His kingdom would grow in an additional way. It would have a leavening influence on the lives of people. Again Jesus asked,

“What shall I compare
the kingdom of God to?”

It is like yeast that a woman took
and mixed into a large amount of flour
until it worked all through the dough.”

Luke 13: 20-21 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Did Jesus seem to think that it was wrong for Him to heal on the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath holier than other days? Is every day holy for a follower of Jesus? What do you think?
2. Why did the ruler of the synagogue criticize the people instead of Jesus (Luke 13:14)? What do you think?
3. Jesus had taught the Parable of the Mustard Seed prior to this time (Matthew 13:31-32). Was Jesus using the Parable of the Mustard seed merely to predict that many people would come to believe on Him; or was He predicting the expansive growth of His church, or both? What to you think?
4. Jesus had also taught the Parable of the Yeast prior to this time (Matthew 13:33). Was Jesus using the Parable of the Yeast to predict that some people would develop into true saints within His church; or was He predicting that His kingdom would have a leavening influence on society, or both? What do you think?

THE NARROW DOOR

Luke 13:22-30

As Jesus was going through the towns and villages of Judea, He was teaching and gradually making His way toward Jerusalem.

In one place, someone asked Him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved” (Luke 13:23)?

Jesus did not at that time give a direct answer to the question of whether few or many would be saved. Instead, He seems to have been more interested in the welfare of the person that asked this question than He was in satisfying that person’s curiosity. So He cautioned the person,

“Make every effort
to enter through the narrow door,
because many, I tell you,
will try to enter and will not be able to.”

Luke 13:24 NIV

Jesus’ answer implied that some people would not make it through the “narrow door,” of which He spoke. He gave then an analogy that made His meaning clearer. He said,

“Once the owner of the house gets up
and closes the door,
you will stand outside knocking
and pleading,
‘Sir, open the door for us.’

Luke 13:25a NIV

The owner of the house, however, will say to those who are standing outside and who want to get in,

“I don’t know you
or where you come from.”

Luke 13:25b NIV

They will then plead that they had a special relationship with Jesus. They will say,

“We ate and drank with you,
and you taught in our streets.”

Luke 13:26 NIV

But the owner of the house will reply,

“I don’t know you
or where you come from.
Away from me, all you evildoers!”

Luke 13:27 NIV

Jesus described what the reaction of those people would be, who spurned Him, when they find themselves shut out. He said,

“There will be weeping there,
and gnashing of teeth,
when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
and all the prophets in the kingdom of God,
but you yourselves thrown out.”

Luke 13:28 NIV

The people who could have been with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will find it especially painful when they see people from all the directions of the compass occupying places in the kingdom of God, which could have belonged to them. Jesus said,

“And they will come from east and west
and from north and south,
and will recline at the table
in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 13:29 NASU

This thought prompted Jesus to make this general observation:

“And behold,
some are last who will be first,
and some are first who will be last.”

Luke 13:30 RSV

THOUGHT QUESTION:

1. Is Jesus' teaching about the “narrow door” (Luke 13:24) the same as what He taught about the “narrow gate,” in Matthew 7:13-14?
2. To where does the “narrow gate” (Matthew 7:13-14) lead? Does the “narrow door” (Luke 13:24) lead to the same place as the “narrow gate?”

3. What was Jesus' answer to the question about whether few or many would be saved? See Matthew 7:14.
4. Jesus said that the "the owner of the house" would close the door (Luke 13:25). Was He speaking about the door to heaven?
5. Once the door to heaven is closed, will those on the outside still have an opportunity to get in? Did Jesus offer any hope to those, who do not respond to Him before the door is closed?
6. Jesus spoke (Luke 13:29) about there being a "feast in the kingdom of God." Was He speaking about a literal "feast?" Will the feast take place here on this earth or in heaven? What do you think?
7. Jesus spoke of people coming "from east and west and from north and south" and reclining "at the table in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). Of whom was Jesus speaking? Was He speaking of Gentiles who could come to believe on Him through the preaching of the gospel? What do you think?
8. Please, explain the saying, as it is used here, "And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last" (Luke 13:30 RSV).

JESUS' FIRST LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM

Luke 13:31-35

While Jesus was discussing whether many or few people would be saved (Luke 13:22-30), some Pharisees came to Him and warned Him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you" (Luke 13:31 NIV).

Jesus, however, had no fear of King Herod (of Galilee). He replied to the Pharisees,

"Go tell that fox,
'I will drive out demons
and heal people today and tomorrow,
and on the third day
I will reach my goal.'"

Luke 13:32 NIV

Jesus was resigned to the fact that He would be killed; but He knew that His death could take place only at Jerusalem. He said to the Pharisees,

"Nevertheless I must go on my way
today and tomorrow and the day following;
for it cannot be that a prophet should perish
away from Jerusalem."

Luke 13:33 RSV

Jesus had already been in Jerusalem several times since He began His public ministry; and He had found that many people in Jerusalem were hostile to Him, especially

the religious leaders. The people that lived from the temple and from the temple trade wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

Even though Jesus was not in Jerusalem, He began to lament over the city, saying,

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
you who kill the prophets
and stone those sent to you,
how often I have longed
to gather your children together,
as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,
but you were not willing!”

Luke 13:34 NIV

Jesus knew that if the people of Jerusalem continued in their present course, it would lead to destruction. However, if they would accept Him, it would avert the destruction of Jerusalem; but Jesus knew that they did not want to accept either Him or His help.

For that reason, Jesus knew that the destruction of Jerusalem was inevitable. As if speaking to the people of Jerusalem He said,

“Look,
your house is left to you desolate.”

Luke 13:35a NIV

He also said,

“I tell you,

you will not see me again until you say,
‘Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.’”

Luke

13:35b NIV

The phrase, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” is a quotation from the 118th Psalm (verse 26). The phrase appears to have been intended as a ceremonial greeting for the rightful King of Israel as he approached the temple.

Jesus predicted, in Luke 13:35, that the people of Jerusalem would not see Him until they said, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

When Jesus made this prediction, He may not have been thinking of His upcoming ceremonial entrance into the city, as it is described in Matthew 21:9 and Luke 19:38. The reason for saying this is that Jesus repeated this same prophecy (Matthew 23:39) even after He had made His ceremonial entry.

Therefore, Jesus may have been thinking of the more remote future. He may have been thinking of a time when the children of Israel would long to see their Messiah but would not see Him until they said of Jesus, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” which would be an acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jesus not afraid of what King Herod might try to do to Him? What do you think?

2. Jesus felt that it was in Jerusalem that He must be put to death. Can you suggest any reason as to why He may have felt that way? Please do if you can?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said (as if speaking to the people of Jerusalem), “I often have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Luke 13:34)? What do you think?
4. If the people of Jerusalem had allowed themselves to be gathered to Jesus, how would that have affected their lives?
5. Do you think that God destroyed Jerusalem because the people refused to accept their Messiah; or do you think that the Messiah was the last hope for changing their hearts, which would have resulted in a peaceful solution to their problems with the Romans?
6. Do you think Jesus felt joy or remorse over the fact that Jerusalem would be destroyed? What are the reasons for your answer?

17. (91)

IN THE HOUSE OF A LEADING PHARISEE

Luke 14: 1-14

When Jesus went into the house of a leading Pharisee in Judea to eat, other Pharisees that were in the house were watching Him closely (Luke 14:1).

Now, there was a man right in front of Jesus, who had dropsy (that is, swollen arms or swollen legs, or both).

Whereupon, Jesus put a question to the lawyers and Pharisees, who had been invited. It was a question that He had often asked such people. He asked,

“Is it lawful to heal
on the Sabbath or not?”

Luke 14:3 NIV

The lawyers and Pharisees could not give a satisfactory answer to Jesus’ question, so they remained silent.

Jesus then took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him away (Luke 14:4).

After that, Jesus asked them,

“If one of you has a son or an ox
that falls into a well on the Sabbath day,
will you not immediately pull him out?”

Luke 14:5 NIV

The lawyers and Pharisees had nothing to say in opposition to this; for they knew that they would, indeed, pull their son or their ox out of a well, even if it were the Sabbath (Luke 14:6).

Jesus noticed that, as the guests came in, they chose the places of honor, so He began to teach them by describing a hypothetical situation (Luke 14:7). He said,

“When someone invites you

to a wedding feast,
do not take the place of honor,
for a person more distinguished than you
may have been invited.
If so, the host who invited both of you
will come and say to you,
'Give this man your seat.'
Then, humiliated,
you will have to take
the least important place."

Luke 14:8-9 NIV

Jesus' advised the guests,

"But when you are invited,
take the lowest place,
so that when your host comes,
he will say to you,
'Friend, move up to a better place.'
Then you will be honored
in the presence of all your fellow guests."

Luke 14:10 NIV

Following that, He taught them a general truth, by
saying,

"For everyone who exalts himself
will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself
will be exalted."

Luke 14:11 NIV

After Jesus had said this to the guests, He had some advice for His host. Jesus said to him,

“When you give a luncheon or dinner,
do not invite your friends,
your brothers or relatives,
or your rich neighbors;
if you do,
they may invite you back
and so you will be repaid.”

Luke 14:12 NIV

Jesus gave an example of how a person could avoid being repaid. He said,

“But when you give a banquet,
invite the poor,
the crippled,
the lame,
the blind,
and you will be blessed.”

Luke 14:13-14a NIV

Inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind would bring a future blessing. Jesus explained,

“Although they cannot repay you,
you will be repaid
at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Luke 14:14 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTION:

1. Why could the Pharisees not give a satisfactory answer to the question of whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? What do you think?
2. Do you find it true that, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11)? Please cite some examples, if you can.
3. Why is it better to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind rather than one’s friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors when one makes a feast? Do you know anyone who has ever done this? Did Jesus intend for His followers to take this advice seriously and follow it? What do you think?
4. Is it better to be fully repaid in this life for the good that one does, or not to be fully repaid in this life? What do you think, and why?
5. Can you think of examples of how a person might hide something good that he (or she) does? Is there any joy in hiding the good that one does?
6. Jesus mentioned “the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14). When will that take place? See John 5:28-29.

18. (92)
THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET
Luke 14:15-24

As Jesus sat in the house of one of the leading Pharisees in Judea, a man that sat at table with Jesus said, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15 NIV).

In response to this comment, Jesus told a parable about a man that gave a great banquet. He said,

“A certain man
was preparing a great banquet
and invited many guests.”

Luke 14:16 NIV

When the hour for the banquet arrived, the man sent his servant to say to those that were invited,

“Come, for everything is now ready.”

Luke 14:17b NIV

Those that were invited, however, all began to make excuses. The first one said,

“I have just bought a field,
and I must go and see it.
Please excuse me.”

Luke 14:18b NIV

Another one said,

“I have just bought five yoke of oxen,
and I’m on my way to try them out.
Please excuse me.”

Luke 14:19 NIV

Still another said,

“I just got married,
so I can’t come.”

Luke 14:20 NIV

The servant returned and reported all this to his master. When the owner of the house heard all of this, he became angry and said to his servant,

“Go out quickly into the streets
and alleys of the town
and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind
and the lame.”

Luke 14:21b NIV

The servant did as his Lord commanded; and after a while he returned, and said,

“Lord, what you ordered has been done,
but there is still room.”

Luke 14:22

Then the man said to the servant,

“Go out to the roads and country lanes
and make them come in,
so that my house will be full.”

Luke 14:23 NIV

Then he added,

“I tell you, not one of those men
who were invited
will get a taste of my banquet.”

Luke 14:24 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Did any of the invited guests in Jesus' parable have a good excuse for not attending the banquet? Are there any good excuses for not responding to Jesus' invitation? What do you think?
2. The owner of the house got angry (Luke 14:21) when none of his invited guests came to his banquet. Was his anger justified? Do you think that God is angry with people if they do not respond to His kind invitation?
3. The man told his servant to bring in “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). Does Jesus want such people in His church? What do you think?
4. The man told his servant to go into “the roads and country lanes,” and he should compel whomever he met

to come to the banquet (Luke 14:23). Do you think Jesus meant that His servants should use physical force to compel people to become Christians?

5. Do you think that the man that prepared the great banquet was justified in saying (Luke 14:24) that none of those people that had been originally invited would get to taste his banquet? See Proverbs 1:24-27.
6. Did Jesus imply that people who refuse His invitation would not get into heaven? What do you think?
7. Will men and women be treated as equals in heaven? See Matthew 22:30.

19. (93)
COUNTING THE COST
Luke 14:25-35

Large crowds of people were trailing along with Jesus in Judea. He turned to them and began to tell them what it would cost them to be His disciples. He warned,

“If anyone comes to me
and does not hate his father and mother,
his wife and children,
his brothers and sisters-yes,
even his own life-
he cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:26 NIV

Jesus also repeated something that He had told His apostles before He had sent them out on their first mission journey. He said,

“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:27 NIV

Jesus then put a hypothetical example before the people that were walking along with Him. He said,

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?”

Luke 14:28 NIV

The obvious answer to Jesus’ question is, “Yes, he will sit down and estimate whether or not he has enough money to complete the tower.”

Jesus continued,

“For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”

Luke 14:29-30 NIV

Jesus then set another hypothetical example before His walking companions. He said,

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king.

Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”

Luke 14:31 NIV

Again, the obvious answer is, “Yes, the king will sit down and consider whether or not he has enough troops to go against his enemy.”

Enlarging upon this, Jesus said,

“If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”

Luke 14:32 NIV

Jesus also warned His walking companions that they must be prepared to say “good-bye” to their possessions if they want to be His disciples. He said,

“So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:33 RSV

A person that is not willing to do all that Jesus has said is like salt that has lost its saltiness. Jesus said,

“Salt is good,
but if it loses its saltiness,
how can it be made salty again?
It is fit neither for the soil
nor for the manure pile;
it is thrown out.”

Luke 14:34-35a NIV

He then admonished His companions,

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Luke 14:35b NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Earlier, Jesus told His apostles that anyone who loved father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:37). Here (Luke 14:26), Jesus said that if anyone does not hate his father and mother, that person cannot be His disciple. Do you see any difference between these two remarks: If you do see a difference, please tell what the difference is?
2. Earlier, Jesus said that anyone that did not take his cross and follow Him is “not worthy” of Him (Matthew

10:38). Here, He said (Luke 14:27) that such a person “cannot be my disciple.” Do you see any difference between these two remarks? If you do, what is the difference?

3. Jesus said, “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33 RSV). Did Jesus mean that a prospective disciple should go out immediately and sell everything he (or she) owns and give it away? Or did Jesus mean that a person should realize that being His follower might cost him or her everything that he or she has? (In order to see how the earliest Christians interpreted their responsibility as regards their possessions, read Acts 4:32 and Acts 5:4.)
4. Do you think that Jesus was trying to frighten people away? If not that, what was He doing?
5. Do you think it is a mistake for a person to become a Christian without counting the cost? Is it wrong for us to encourage people to become Christians without warning them of the possible cost? What do you think?

20. (94)

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP and THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:1-10

Not only did scribes (teachers of the Law of Moses) and Pharisees often gather around Jesus to hear what He had to say, but ordinary people did that, too.

At one point, a group of tax collectors gathered around Him. Now, as you will remember, tax collectors were generally considered to be unpatriotic, because they collected taxes for a foreign power (Rome).

In addition, some other people, whom the Pharisees would consider to be “sinners,” were also gathered around Jesus. Even these people wanted to hear what Jesus had to say.

The scribes and Pharisees that were present held it against Jesus that He associated with such people; and they muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2 NIV).

In response to their muttering, Jesus told them this parable. He said,

“What man among you,
if he has a hundred sheep
and has lost one of them,
does not leave the ninety-nine
in the open pasture
and go after the one which is lost
until he finds it?”

Luke 14:4 NASU

Jesus continued:

“And when he finds it,
he joyfully puts it on his shoulders
and goes home.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors
together and says,
‘Rejoice with me;
I have found my lost sheep.’”

Luke 15:5-6 NIV

Jesus drew the following lesson from His parable. He
said,

“I tell you that in the same way
there will be more rejoicing in heaven
over one sinner who repents
than over ninety-nine righteous persons
who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15:7 NIV

Next, using a different parable, Jesus taught the same
lesson again. He said,

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins
and loses one.
Does she not light a lamp,
sweep the house and search carefully
until she finds it?”

Luke 15:8 NIV

Jesus continued:

“And when she finds it,
she calls her friends and neighbors together
and says,
‘Rejoice with me;
I have found my lost coin.’”

Luke 15:9 NIV

Jesus drew from the Parable of the Lost Coin the identical lesson that He had drawn from the Parable of the Lost Sheep. He said,

“In the same way,
I tell you,
there is rejoicing
in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:10 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus associate with tax collectors and sinners? What do you think?
2. Is it permissible for Christians to associate with sinners? See 1 Corinthians 5:9-11. Can Christians participate in everything that sinners do?
3. Should Christians seek out and try to save people that are lost? Why should they do this?
4. Why does heaven rejoice over each sinner that repents?

21. (95)

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

Luke 15:11-32

Continuing to teach about lost things, Jesus told a parable about a man who had two sons. The younger of his two sons said to their father,

“Father,
give me the share of the estate
that falls to me.”

Luke 15:12

The man did as his younger son requested. He divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all that he had and set off for a distant country.

In that country the young man squandered all his wealth in wild living. After he had wasted everything, there came a severe famine over that land and he began to be in need.

So he hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. The young man longed to fill his stomach even with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything to eat.

When the young man came to his senses, he said to himself,

“How many of my father’s hired men
have food to spare,

and here I am starving to death!”

Luke 15:17 NIV

The young man decided,

“I will set out and go back to my father
and say to him:
‘Father, I have sinned against heaven
and against you.
I am no longer worthy to be called your son;
make me like one of your hired men.’”

Luke 15:18-19 NIV

Jesus continued His parable by saying,

“So he got up and went to his father.
But while he was still a long way off,
his father saw him
and was filled with compassion for him;
he ran to his son,
threw his arms around him and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20 NIV

The son said to his father,

“Father,
I have sinned against heaven
and against you.
I am no longer worthy
to be called your son.”

Luke 15:21 NIV

Before the son could finish his speech, however, his
father interrupted him and said to his servants,

“Quick! Bring the best robe
and put it on him.
Put a ring on his finger
and sandals on his feet.
Bring the fattened calf and kill it.
Let's have a feast and celebrate.
For this son of mine was dead
and is alive again;
he was lost and is found.”

Luke 15:22-24a NIV

Then they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. As he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants to him and asked him what was going on. The servant replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has gotten him back in health” (Luke 15:27).

At that, the older brother became angry and refused to go in, but his father went out to him and pleaded with him; but the older brother answered his father, saying,

“Look! All these years
I've been slaving for you
and never disobeyed your orders.
Yet you never gave me even a young goat
so I could celebrate with my friends.
But when this son of yours
who has squandered your property

with prostitutes comes home,
you kill the fattened calf for him!”

Luke 15:29-30 NIV

The father replied,

“My son, you are always with me,
and everything I have is yours.

But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother
of yours was dead

and is alive again;
he was lost and is found.”

Luke 15:31-32 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. The younger son wanted to leave home. Do you have any ideas as to what may have motivated him to want to leave home?
2. The younger son told his father that he had sinned? What, specifically, was his sin? Can you put a name to it?
3. Was it only a coincidence that the father was out looking down the road that day? Or do you think the father was often looking down that road? What does this suggest to you about God?
4. What was it that irritated the older son. Was he irritated because he did not get to eat a calf? What do you think his problem was?

5. All three of Jesus' parables in Luke chapter fifteen concern lost things. Are the three parables similar to each other in any way? What do they teach?

22. (96)

THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST MANAGER

Luke 16:1-13

Presumably, the tax collectors and “sinners” (Luke 15:1) were still listening to Jesus as He told His disciples the following parable.

Jesus said that there was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting the possessions of the rich man. So the rich man called his manager in and asked him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer” (Luke 16:2 NIV).

The dishonest manager thought to himself, “What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg” (Luke 16:3 NIV).

A way finally occurred to the dishonest manager how he could provide for his future. He said, “I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses” (Luke 16:4 NIV).

The dishonest manager called in each of his master’s debtors. The first one he asked, “How much do you owe my master?” (Luke 16:5 NIV)?

The man answered, “One hundred batos of olive oil (about eight hundred gallons).”

So the manager told the debtor, “Take your bill, sit down quickly, and write fifty batos (about 400 gallons).”

In this way the dishonest manager caused his master to loose about four hundred gallons of olive oil; but by doing so, he made friends for himself among his master’s debtors.

Then the dishonest manager asked another of his master’s debtors, “How much do you owe?”

“One hundred kores (about one thousand bushels) of wheat,” the debtor answered.

The dishonest manager told him, “Take your bill and write eighty” (about 800 bushels). In this way the dishonest manager caused his master to loose 200 bushels of wheat; but he made more friends for himself among his master’s debtors.

At this point, Jesus’ parable took an unexpected turn, in that He did not condemn the dishonest manager. What Jesus said was,

“The master commended
the dishonest manager
because he had acted shrewdly.”

Luke 16:8a NIV

Jesus explained,

“For the people of this world
are more shrewd
in dealing with their own kind
than are the people of the light.”

Luke 16:8b NIV

Then Jesus advised His followers,

“I tell you, use worldly wealth
to gain friends for yourselves,
so that when it is gone,
you will be welcomed
into eternal dwellings.”

Luke 16:9 NIV

Concerning honest and dishonest people, Jesus said,

“Whoever can be trusted
with very little
can also be trusted with much,
and whoever is dishonest with very little
will also be dishonest with much.”

Luke 16:10 NIV

Then, Jesus warned His listeners,

“So if you have not been trustworthy
in handling worldly wealth,
who will trust you with true riches?”

Luke 16:11 NIV

Further, Jesus said,

“And if you have not been trustworthy
with someone else’s property,

who will give you property of your own?”
Luke 16:12 NIV

In this connection, Jesus repeated something that He had said in Galilee (Matthew 6:24), namely,

“No servant can serve two masters;
for either he will hate the one
and love the other,
or else he will be loyal to the one
and despise the other.”

Luke 16:13a NKJV

Then Jesus said,

“You cannot serve God
and mammon [money].”

Luke 16:13b NKJV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Was what the dishonest manager did morally right? How can it be said that the dishonest manager acted “shrewdly” (Luke 16:8)?
2. Who are the “people of light,” of whom Jesus spoke (Luke 16:8)? Should “people of light” be as diligent in providing for their future in heaven as are “the people of this world” in providing for their material welfare on earth? Please, explain.

3. How can a person use “worldly wealth” (Luke 16:9) to make friends for himself in heaven?
4. Jesus contrasted “worldly wealth” with “true riches” (Luke 16: 11). What are the “true riches” of which Jesus spoke?
5. Jesus spoke of a person’s being “trustworthy with someone else’s property” (Luke 16:12). Has each of us been entrusted with “property” that is not our own? What “property” has been entrusted to us?
6. Jesus implied that “property” would be given to His followers in the future. Apparently, it will be “property” that will belong to His followers themselves (Luke 16:12). Did Jesus imply that in heaven His people would be not only guests but also property owners? What do you think?
7. Why is it not possible for a person to serve God and money (Luke 16:13)? Is it because God will not permit it, or is it because it is inherently impossible, or both? What do you think?

23. (97)

JESUS INSTRUCTED SOME PHARISEES

Luke 16:14-18

Some of the Pharisees heard Jesus teach His parable about the Dishonest Manager. They sneered at Him (Luke

16:14) when He said (Luke 16:13) that a person cannot serve both God and money. They sneered because they were lovers of money.

In reply to them, Jesus gave them His frank appraisal of their attitude. He said to them,

“You are the ones
who justify yourselves in the eyes of men,
but God knows your hearts.”

Luke 16:15a NIV

They were looking at things as people do, rather than as God does. Jesus said,

“What is highly valued among men
is detestable in God’s sight.”

Luke 16:15b NIV

Loving money, however, was not the only fault that these Pharisees had. Many of them were blind to what God was doing in their day. They were not aware that the time for the Law and the Prophets was drawing to a close. Jesus said to them,

“The law and the prophets were until John.
Since that time the kingdom of God
has been preached, ...”

Luke 16:16a NKJV

In contrast to most of the Pharisees, many of the common people recognized that the kingdom of God was

approaching; and they were striving to get into it. Jesus alluded to this, when He said,

“and everyone is pressing into it.”

Luke 16:16b NKJV

The Pharisees, however, appear to have feared that if people followed Jesus, people’s respect for the Law and the Prophets would decrease. Jesus assured them, however, that if people became His follower, the Law and the Prophets would still be important but, perhaps, not important in the same way as before. He said,

“But it is easier
for heaven and earth to pass away
than for one stroke of a letter
of the Law to fail.”

Luke 16:17 NASU

Then Jesus put His finger on one especially harmful practice among the Pharisees. He said,

“Anyone who divorces his wife
and marries another woman
commits adultery,
and the man who marries a divorced woman
commits adultery.”

Luke 16:18 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What is wrong with being a “lover of money?” Is it dangerous? If it is dangerous, why is it?
2. Jesus said, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Luke 16:17 NASU). Did Jesus mean that His followers must live by the Old Testament? See Galatians 3:24-25. By which law, then, should Jesus’ followers live? See Galatians 6:2.
3. Is it better for a man not to divorce his wife? What do you think?
4. Is it better for a Christian man not to marry a woman that some man has divorced? What do you think?
5. Is it better for a woman not to divorce her husband? What do you think?
6. Is it better for a Christian woman not to marry a man that some woman has divorced? What do you think?

24. (98)

THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19-31

To some of the Pharisees, who loved money (Luke 16:14), Jesus told a story about a rich man and a beggar. The beggar’s name was Lazarus.

Lazarus was laid at the rich man's gate, and Lazarus longed to eat the bits of food that fell from the rich man's table.

Lazarus was covered with sores, and dogs came and licked his sores (Luke 6:21).

Now it came about that Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried (Luke 16:22).

The rich man found himself in Hades in torment. He lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away and he saw that Lazarus was by Abraham's side (Luke 16:23).

Then the rich man called out to Abraham, saying,

“Father Abraham,
have pity on me
and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger
in water and cool my tongue,
because I am in agony in this fire.”

Luke 16:24 NIV

Abraham replied,

“Son, remember that in your lifetime
you received your good things,
while Lazarus received bad things,
but now he is comforted here
and you are in agony.”

Luke 16:25 NIV

Abraham continued,

“And besides all this,
between us and you
a great chasm has been fixed,
so that those who want to go
from here to you cannot,
nor can anyone cross over
from there to us.”

Luke 16:26 NIV

Then the rich man answered, saying,

“Then I beg you, father,
send Lazarus to my father’s house,
for I have five brothers.
Let him warn them,
so that they will not also
come to this place of torment.”

Luke 16:27-28 NIV

Abraham replied,

“They have Moses and the Prophets;
let them listen to them.”

Luke 16:29 NIV

The man said,

“No, father Abraham;
but if one goes to them from the dead,
they will repent.”

Luke 16:30 NKJV

Again, Abraham replied,

“If they do not listen to
Moses and the Prophets,
they will not be convinced
even if someone rises from the dead.”

Luke 16:31 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Does having riches in this life help a person for the life to come, or is being rich a disadvantage for the life to come? What do you think?
2. A great chasm has been fixed between where Abraham and Lazarus are and where the rich man is, so that no one can pass from one part to the other. In view of this, do you think that prayers spoken by living people on behalf of the dead make it possible for a dead person to pass from one part to the other?
3. What do you think the rich man wanted Lazarus to say to his brothers?
4. Abraham did not think that it would help the rich man's brothers if Lazarus went back from the dead to warn them. Is it still true that if people will not listen to what God said in the Bible, they would not listen if someone were to come back from the dead to warn them?

25. (99)
FORGIVENESS AND FAITH
Luke 17:1-10

Jesus warned His disciples that there would be people who would cause others to sin. He said,

“It is inevitable
that stumbling blocks come,
but woe to him
through whom they come!”

Luke 17:1

NASU

Jesus predicted here, as He had done before (Matthew 18:7-9), that there would be dire consequences for anyone that causes others to sin. He said,

“It would be better for him
to be thrown into the sea
with a millstone tied around his neck
than for him to cause
one of these little ones to sin.”

Luke 17:2 NIV

Then He advised,

“So watch yourselves.”

Luke 17:3a NIV

Following this, Jesus began to discuss how His disciples should react when a brother sins against them. He said,

“If your brother sins,
rebuke him,
and if he repents,
forgive him.”

Luke 17:3b NIV

Jesus reminded them that they should be willing to forgive a brother not just once but often. See Matthew 18:21-22. He added,

“If he sins against you
seven times in a day,
and seven times comes back to you
and says, ‘I repent,’
forgive him.”

Luke 17:4 NIV

The disciples had difficulty accepting the idea that they should forgive the same person for the same offense over and over again. They said to their Lord,

“Increase our faith!”

Luke 17:5

Jesus replied,

“If you have faith
as small as a mustard seed,
and had said to this mulberry tree,

‘Be rooted up and planted in the sea;’
it would have obeyed you.’”

Luke 17:6

Jesus then turned to another topic. In order to keep His disciples from becoming prideful, He reminded them that they were servants. He said,

“Suppose one of you had a servant
plowing or looking after the sheep.
Would he say to the servant
when he comes in from the field,
‘Come along now and sit down to eat?’”

Luke 17:7 NIV

He continued:

“Would he not rather say,
‘Prepare my supper,
get yourself ready and wait on me
while I eat and drink;
after that you may eat and drink?’”

Luke 17:8 NIV

Jesus asked further,

“Would he thank the servant
because he did
what he was told to do?”

Luke 17:9 NIV

Jesus concluded His remarks on this occasion, by saying,

“So you also,
when you have done everything
you were told to do,
should say,
‘We are unworthy servants;
we have only done our duty.’”

Luke 17:10 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Should Jesus’ disciples rebuke everyone that sins against them, or are they supposed to rebuke only their brothers and sisters in the Lord? See Luke 17:3b. What do you think?
2. If you rebuke a person and that person does not repent, are you supposed to forgive him? What do you think?
3. Is there any limit to the number of times that we should be willing to forgive a person? What do you think?
4. Jesus said to His disciples that if they had faith “as a mustard seed,” they could have said to a tree “be planted in the sea,” and it would have happened (Luke 17:6). Was Jesus talking only about moving trees? What do you think?
5. Did Jesus mean that people today can perform miracles just as the apostles did?

6. Is there some sense, however, in which people today can accomplish great things by faith? What do you think?
7. Is there any reason for us to be prideful over the service that we give to God? How should we feel about our service? See Luke 17:10.

26. (100)
THE TEN LEPERS
Luke 17:11-19

Jesus slowly made His way toward Jerusalem, and He passed along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

As He was going through a certain village, ten men who were lepers met Him. They stood at a distance, as they should, and called out with a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us” (Luke 17:13)!

When Jesus saw the lepers, He said simply, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” (According to Leviticus 14:1-7, this is what people that had recovered from leprosy were supposed to do.)

So the lepers started off immediately to obey Jesus’ words. As they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy (Luke 17:14).

One of them, when he saw that he was clean, he came

back to Jesus. He praised God in a loud voice, and fell

on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked Him. This man was not an Israelite but a Samaritan.

When the man did this, Jesus asked,

“Were not all ten cleansed?
Where are the other nine?”

Luke 17:17 NIV

Jesus enlarged upon this by asking,

“Was no one found to return
and give praise to God
except this foreigner?”

Luke 17:18 NIV

Jesus then said to the Samaritan,

“Rise and go;
your faith has made you well.”

Luke 17:19 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Were the ten lepers healed before they did what Jesus said or only after they started off to obey? Is this point of significance?
2. Is thankfulness an attribute that Jesus admired in people? Is this an attribute that you admire?

3. Have you ever known a person who was extremely grateful for what others did for him or her? Please tell about that person.
4. What is the significance of the fact that the leper that returned to give thanks was a Samaritan, a foreigner?

27. (101)

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD and the RETURN OF THE SON OF MAN

Luke 17:20-37

Now, some of the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come (Luke 17:20a). They seemed to have been thinking of the kingdom of God as an earthly kingdom.

Jesus answered them by saying,

**“The kingdom of God
does not come with observation;”**

nor will people say,

‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’”

Luke 17:20 b-21a NKJV

From this it was obvious that the kingdom of God was to be different from any earthly kingdom. It would not come with beating drums and marching soldiers; nor would

people be able to say that it is limited to one particular place. Jesus explained why it is so. He said,

“...because the kingdom of God
is within you.”

Luke 17:21 b NIV

Following this, Jesus began to teach His disciples what it would be like after He would be taken from them and before He would return. During that time His disciples would long to see one of the days of the Son of Man but would not see it (Luke 17:22). He warned,

“Men will tell you,
‘There he is!’
or ‘Here he is!’”

Luke 17:23 a NIV

Therefore, He advised,

“Do not go running off after them.”

Luke 17:23 b NIV

It will not be necessary to go running after people who claim that Jesus is hidden somewhere on earth; because when He returns, all will see Him. He said,

“For the Son of Man in his day
will be like the lightning,
which flashes and lights up the sky

from one end to the other.”

Luke 17:24 NIV

Jesus explained that before He would be able to come again He would have to undergo suffering and rejection. He said,

“But first he [the Son of Man] must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”

Luke 17:25 NIV

Then, He compared the days in which He would return to the days of Noah, saying,

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.”

Luke 17:26 NIV

People will be no more expecting the Son of Man than they were expecting the flood in the days of Noah. Jesus said,

“People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Luke 17:27 NIV

He also compared the people who will be alive on the day of His return to the people of Sodom. He said,

“It was the same in the days of Lot.
People were eating and drinking,
buying and selling, planting and building.
But the day Lot left Sodom,
fire and sulfur rained down from heaven
and destroyed them all.
It will be just like this
on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

Luke 17:28-30 NIV

He gave His followers some advice about the day of His return. He said,

“On that day no one
who is on the roof of his house,
with his goods inside,
should go down to get them.
Likewise, no one in the field
should go back for anything.”

Luke 17:31 NIV

Then He cautioned,

“Remember Lot’s wife!”

Luke 17:32 NIV

He urged His disciples to be ready to accept whatever persecution may come their way. He said,

“Whoever tries to keep his life
will lose it,
and whoever loses his life
will preserve it.”

Luke 17:33 NIV

Where it is nighttime when Jesus returns, the following will happen:

“I tell you, on that night
two people will be in one bed;

one will be taken and the other left.”

Luke 17:34 NIV

Where it is daytime, the following will happen:

“Two women will be
grinding grain together;
one will be taken and the other left.”

Luke 17:35 NIV

Jesus’ disciples were very curious to know where all of this would take place. They asked, “Where, Lord” (Luke 17:37)?

His replied,

“Where there is a dead body,
there the vultures will gather.”

Luke 17:37 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Do you suppose that the Pharisees were hoping to see the kingdom of God come with blowing trumpets and marching soldiers? Did the kingdom of God make its appearance in such a way? When did the kingdom make its appearance? See Acts 2:1-36.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21)? Did Jesus mean that the kingdom of God was already present among the people of His day, or did He mean that the nature of God’s kingdom is such that it resides in the hearts of people? What do you think?
3. What happened in the days of Lot? See Genesis chapter nineteen. Please, describe what happened?
4. Why should a person not go into his (or her) house to get any of his (or her) possessions (Luke 17:30-31) when the Son of Man is revealed? Will earthly possessions be of any value at that time? Will this be the end of the world?
5. What is the significance of Jesus’ injunction, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32)? What mistake did Lot’s wife make? See Genesis 19:26. How can we avoid making the same mistake that Lot’s wife made?
6. What did Jesus mean when He said, “One will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:34-35)? Did He mean that

one person would be taken from the earth when Jesus comes and another left behind to experience the destruction of the earth? Will everyone then appear before the Judgement throne of God? See Matthew 25:32.

7. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather” (Luke 17:37)? Did He mean that His disciples need not worry about finding Him when He returns, because they would be drawn to Him? What do you think?

28. (102)

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

Luke 18:1-8

After Jesus had instructed His disciples about His Second Coming (Luke 17:22-37), He taught them that they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1).

To illustrate the value of persistent prayer, Jesus told His disciples a story about a judge in a certain city. He said that this judge did not fear God or respect people.

Now, there was also a widow in that city, who came to the judge over and over again with the same plea. She pled,

“Get justice for me from my adversary.”

Luke 18:3 NKJV

According to some translations, the woman said to the Judge, “Vindicate me” or “Avenge me.” It would seem, however, that she wanted redress for some financial injustice that had been done to her, not vengeance.

For a long time the judge would not help her but after a while he said to himself,

“I don’t fear God or respect people.
Yet because this widow
keeps bothering me,
I will grant her justice.
Otherwise, she will keep coming
and wear me out.”

Luke 18:4b-5 ISV

Then Jesus said,

“Pay attention to
what the unjust judge says.”

Luke 18:6

Jesus highlighted the lesson, which His parable taught, by asking,

“Won’t God grant his chosen people justice
when they cry out to him
day and night?
Is he slow to help them?”

Luke 18:7 ISV

These were rhetorical questions, of course; but Jesus answered them anyway. He said,

“I tell you,
he will see that they get justice,
and quickly.”

Luke 18:8 NIV

God will grant justice to His chosen people. There is no doubt about that, but there is some doubt about whether or not His chosen people will have the faith to keep on praying until Jesus returns. Jesus asked,

“However, when the Son of Man comes,
will he find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:8 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What would you say to people who find that God is very slow in answering their prayers for help?
2. Do people sometimes get so discouraged that they give up praying? What do you think?
3. Do you think the devil wants people to give up praying? In what way is it dangerous for God’s people to give up praying?

4. Do you find, from your own experience, that God eventually helps people that live according to the Bible and who plead for His help?
5. Is it possible for people to receive so many blessings that they no longer think it is necessary to pray? What do you think?
6. Do you think there will be faith on the earth when Jesus returns? Please explain why you think as you do?

29. (103)

A PHARISEE AND A TAX COLLECTOR

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus told this parable to some of the people who were convinced that they were righteous and who looked down upon everyone else. He said,

“Two men went up to the temple to pray,
one a Pharisee
and the other a tax collector.”

Luke 18:10 NIV

The Pharisee in Jesus’ story stood by himself and prayed,

“God, I thank you
that I am not like other men
-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-

or even like this tax collector.”

Luke 18:11b NIV

The Pharisee continued to list his good points in prayer.
He said,

“I fast twice a week
and give a tenth of all I get.”

Luke 18:12 NIV

In contrast to this, the tax collector stood at a distance
and would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast
and said,

“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Luke 18:13b NIV

Jesus’ comment concerning this was:

“I tell you,
this man went down to his house
justified
rather than the other...”

Luke 18:14a NAS

Jesus continued,

“For everyone who exalts himself
will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself
will be exalted.”

Luke 18:14b NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not a robber, an evildoer, or an adulterer (Luke 18:11). Was it wrong for the Pharisee to be thankful that he did not do those bad things? If not, what was wrong with his prayer?
2. The tax collector prayed a prayer that was different from the Pharisee's. What do you suppose it was that Jesus liked about the tax collector's prayer?
3. Jesus said that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14b NIV). Did Jesus mean that proud people would be humbled in this life and that humble people would be exalted in this life; or did He mean that this would happen in heaven? What do you think?

30. (104)

TEACHING ABOUT DIVORCE

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

After having spent some time in Judea, Jesus crossed to the other side of the Jordan River (Matthew 19:1).

Matthew 19:1 seems to imply that Jesus went immediately to the other side of the Jordan after He left Galilee. However, Matthew may not have wished to leave that impression, since all the events narrated in Luke 9:51-

18:14 took place after Jesus left Galilee (Luke 9:51) and before He crossed the Jordan.

Once Jesus was on the eastern side of the Jordan River, certain Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked Him,

“Is it lawful for a man
to divorce his wife
for any and every reason?”

Matthew 19:3 NIV

These Pharisees, perhaps, knew that Jesus was opposed to divorce. They may have hoped to show that His views conflicted with the Law of Moses, and they had a scripture passage in mind, with which they hoped to trip Him.

Jesus knew, of course, what the Law of Moses said about divorce. He also knew what argument they intended to make, so He asked them,

“What did Moses command you?”

Mark 10:3 NIV

They replied, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away” (Mark 10:4 NIV).

That is true. Moses did permit a man to divorce his wife,

simply by giving her a certificate of divorce

(Deuteronomy 24:1-4); but Jesus went back to an earlier

scripture (Genesis 1:27). He asked them,

“Haven’t you read
that at the beginning the Creator
‘made them male and female?’”

Matthew 19:4

Jesus continued,

“For this reason a man will leave
his father and mother
and be united to his wife,
and the two will become one flesh.”

Matthew 19:5 NIV

He then concluded,

“So they are no longer two,
but one.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let man not separate.”

Matthew 19:6 NIV

In rebuttal they asked, “Why then, did Moses
command (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) that a man give his wife a
certificate of divorce and send her away” (Matthew 19:7)?

Jesus explained,

“Moses permitted you
to divorce your wives because
your hearts were hard.
But it was not this way
from the beginning.”

Matthew 19:8 NIV

Now, when Jesus and His disciples were indoors, the disciples asked Him about divorce (Mark 10:10). He explained,

“I tell you that
whoever divorces his wife,
except for sexual immorality,
and marries another woman
commits adultery.”

Matthew 19:9 ISV

What applies to a man also applies to a woman. Jesus said,

“And if she divorces her husband
and marries another man,
she commits adultery.”

Mark 10:12 NIV

The disciples seem to have thought that what Jesus said about divorce and remarriage was very restricting. For they said, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10 NIV).

To that Jesus replied,

“Not everyone can accept this word,
but only those
to whom it has been given.”

Matthew 19:11 NIV

Not everyone is willing to live by His rules, but some are; and everyone should try. He said,

“For some are eunuchs
because they were born that way;
others were made that way by men;
and others have renounced marriage
because of the kingdom of heaven.
The one who can accept this
should accept it.”

Matthew 19:12 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Moses permit a man to divorce his wife? See Matthew 19:8. What do you think about the custom of allowing a man to divorce his wife, simply by giving her a certificate of divorce? Is that a good custom?
2. What did Jesus think about divorce? Was He in favor of it or opposed to it? See Matthew 19:6. Why is divorce harmful, if it is? Whom does it harm? What do you think?
3. Must a man put away (divorce) his wife if she has been sexually unfaithful to him? Can he keep her if he likes? What do you think?
4. Does Jesus permit a man to marry again if he has justly put away (divorced) his wife because she was sexually unfaithful to him? See Matthew 19:9.

5. Does Jesus permit a woman who has been put away (divorced) to marry another man? See Matthew 5:32.
6. Does Jesus permit a man to marry a woman who has been put away (divorced)? See Matthew 5:32.
7. Does what Jesus said about men divorcing their wives apply equally as well to woman divorcing their husbands? What do you think?
8. Does God expect unmarried people to live without sexual activity? See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.
9. Did Jesus teach that it is better not to get married at all? Do you think the church should make a rule forbidding its teachers and preachers to marry?

31. (105)

LITTLE CHILDREN BLESSED

Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17

People in Judea were bringing their children to Jesus so He could lay His hands on them and pray for them (Matthew 19:13). Luke tells us that the children were babies (Luke 18:15).

When the disciples saw people bringing their children to Jesus, they rebuked them (Luke 18:15).

However, when Jesus saw His disciples turning away the children and their parents, He was greatly distressed

(Mark 10:14). So He called for the little children to return to Him (Luke 18:16) and said to His disciples,

“Let the little children alone
and do not prevent them
from coming to me,
for the kingdom of heaven
is of such as these.”

Matthew 19:14

Jesus continued,

“Truly I say to you,
anyone that does not receive
the kingdom of God like a child,
will not get into it.”

Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17

Jesus then embraced the little children and blessed them by putting His hands on each of them (Mark 10:16).

After He had done this, He and His disciples moved on to other places (Matthew 19:15).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why was it, do you suppose, that the disciples of Jesus were not allowing people to bring their small children to Jesus?

2. What did Jesus mean when He said, with regards to children, “for the kingdom of heaven is of such as these” (Matthew 19:14)?
3. Matthew regularly referred to the kingdom as “the kingdom of heaven,” while Mark and Luke called it the “the kingdom of God.” Were they referring to the same thing?
4. It appears that Jesus could bless the children without actually pronouncing a blessing over them? Does this strike you as being strange? Does it suggest that His ability to bless people did not depend upon ritualistic words?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Truly I say to you, anyone that does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, will not get into it” (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17)? Did Jesus mean that the citizens of the kingdom of God must have a childlike quality about them? What quality (or qualities) do citizens of God’s kingdom have in common with children?
6. Did Jesus mean (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17) that babies are supposed to be taken in as members of the church? Was He teaching that little children should be baptized? Did He mean that unless little children are baptized they will go to hell?

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

Jesus started out on the road one day, on the eastern side of the Jordan River; and a man ran up Him and fell to his knees before Him (Mark 10:17). The man's brisk actions suggest that he was a young man. The Gospel of Luke tells us that he was also a "ruler" (Luke 18:18).

The man came with an urgent question. He asked,

"Good Teacher,
what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Mark 10:17 RSV

Jesus replied,

"Why do you call me good?
No one is good but God alone."

Mark 10:18 RSV

So the young man put His question another way. He asked,

"Teacher, what good thing must I do
to get eternal life?"

Matthew 19:16b NIV

To this Jesus replied,

"Why do you ask me about what is good?"
If you want to enter life,
obey the commandments."

Matthew 19:17 NIV

The young man was confused. Which commandments did Jesus mean? There are many commandments in the Old Testament. So the young man asked Him, “Which ones” (Matthew 19:18)?

Jesus replied from Exodus 20:12-17,

“You know the commandments:
‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery,
do not steal, do not give false testimony,
do not defraud,
honor your father and mother.’”

Mark 10:19 NIV

To these Jesus added from Leviticus 19:18,

“And love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 19:19b NIV

These were familiar commandments. The young man replied to Jesus, “Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy” (Mark 10:20 NIV).

Upon hearing this, Jesus looked at the young man with love in His heart (Mark 10:21) and said to him,

“One thing you lack.

If you want to be perfect, go,
sell your possessions and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven.
Then come, follow me.”

Matthew 19:21 NIV

The young man, however, had great wealth and could not part with it; so he went away sorrowfully (Mark 10:22).

At his departure, Jesus looked around at His disciples and remarked to them,

“Children, how hard it is
to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle
than for a rich man
to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:24-25 NIV

The disciples were amazed at what Jesus said. They asked each other, “Who then can be saved” (Mark 10:26 NIV)?

Jesus looked directly at them and said,

“With man this is impossible,
but not with God;
all things are possible with God.”

Mark 10:27 NIV

Then Peter, speaking for all the apostles, replied, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us” (Matthew 19:27 NIV)?

To Peter, and to the other apostles, Jesus replied,

“I tell you the truth,
at the renewal of all things,
when the Son of Man
sits on his glorious throne,
you who have followed me
will also sit on twelve thrones,
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Matthew 19:28 NIV

Jesus expanded His comments by saying,

“I tell you the truth,
no one who has left home
or brothers or sisters
or mother or father
or children or fields for me and the gospel
will fail to receive a hundred times as much
in this present age
(homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children

and fields-and with them, persecutions)
and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Mark 10:29-30 NIV

Then Jesus added,

“But many who are first will be last,
and the last first.”

Mark 10:31 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus told the rich young ruler to obey the commandments (Matthew 19:17b). This differs from what Peter said on the day of Pentecost. Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NIV). Why did Peter’s message differ from Jesus’ message? Is it because the rich young ruler lived under the old covenant, while Jesus’ followers, ever since Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, live under the new covenant?
2. Jesus told the rich young ruler, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:21 NIV). Jesus had not required this of all others. Why did He require that this young man sell everything and give it to the poor? What do you think?

3. Was Jesus disappointed when the rich young ruler turned away? What do you think?
4. Why is it hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God? Is it impossible for rich people to be saved? What do you think?
5. Is it still true that people who leave their family and their possessions for the gospel's sake will be rewarded both in this life and in the life to come (Mark 10:29-30)? What do you think?

33. (107)

THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus was teaching on the other side of the Jordan River. He said that the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner that went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. Having agreed with the workers to pay them one denarius for a day's work, the landowner sent the workers into his vineyard (Mathew 20:2).

About the third hour of the day (nine o'clock), the landowner went out again and saw other men standing idle in the marketplace. He said,

“You also go
and work in my vineyard,

and I will pay you whatever is right.”

Matthew 20:4 NIV

Also they went to the vineyard.

About the sixth and ninth hours, the landowner went out and did the same.

About the eleventh hour, he found still others standing idle and asked them,

“Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?”

Matthew 20:6b NIV

They replied, “Because no one hired us.”

So he said to them,

“You also go and work in my vineyard.”

Matthew 20:7b NIV

When evening came, the master of the vineyard said to his foreman,

“Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.”

Matthew 20:8 NIV

The workers hired about the eleventh hour came, and each one received a denarius. When the workers that had been hired first came, they expected to receive more, but each of them also got one denarius.

Having received only one denarius, they began to grumble against the landowner, saying, “These men, who were hired last, worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day” (Matthew 20:12).

The owner replied to one of them, saying,

“Friend,
I am not being unfair to you.
Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?
Take your pay and go.
I want to give the man who was hired last
the same as I gave you.”

Matthew 20:13-14 NIV

The landowner continued,

“Don’t I have the right
to do what I want with my own money?
Or are you envious
because I am generous?”

Matthew 20:15 NIV

Jesus ended His parable with a saying that He had used before. He said,

“So the last will be first,
and the first will be last.”

Matthew 20:16 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Is Jesus recruiting workers for His vineyard today?
2. What are some of the things that the workers in Jesus' vineyard are expected to do?
3. Do you think people will be rewarded in heaven for their work? Will the nature of the reward in heaven depend upon the number of years that a person has been in Christian service?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said that “The last will be first and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:16)? What do you think?
5. Does it bother you that the workers in this parable all received the same pay? What does that tell you about the “landowner?” Was He unfair, or was He generous? What do you think?
6. Is there any reason for long-time Christians to feel that they are better or that they are more worthy than new Christians?

34. (108)
THE HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND
John 9:1-40

After a short stay east of the Jordan, Jesus came back across the river and was in (or near) Jerusalem. As He walked along with His disciples, He and they saw a man who had been blind from birth.

The disciples asked Jesus, “Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus, knowing that He would give the man eyesight, answered,

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,
but this happened
in order that the works of God
might be shown in him.”

John 9:3

Jesus’ explained how He felt about doing the “the works of God,” saying,

“As long as it is day,
we must do the work of him
who sent me.
Night is coming, when no one can work.
While I am in the world,
I am the light of the world.”

John 9:4-5 NIV

Jesus then spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes; and He said to the man, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam" (John 9:7), which was in Jerusalem.

The man went and washed. When he came back and was able to see, his neighbors and people that had seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some of them agreed that it was the man, but others disputed, saying, "No, he only looks like that man."

The man himself said, "I am the man."

They asked, "How then were your eyes opened?"

He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see" (John 9:11 NIV).

They asked him, "Where is this man?"

"I don't know," he replied.

Then the people led the man to the Pharisees.

Now, it happened that it was a Sabbath day that Jesus had made mud and opened the man's eyes. Because it was on the Sabbath day that it happened, the Pharisees interrogated the man. They wanted to know exactly how he had regained his sight.

"He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see" (John 9:15b NIV).

At that, the Pharisees began to discuss about Jesus,

for He was on everyone's mind. Some of them said,

“This man [Jesus] is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (John 9:16a NIV).

Others of them asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” Thus, they were divided as to who Jesus was.

Eventually, they turned again to the blind man and demanded of Him, “What do you have to say about him? It was your eyes that he opened” (John 9:17).

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

The Pharisees did not believe that the man had been blind and had regained his sight until, that is, they had sent for his parents.

Then they asked his parents, “Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How is it that he now is able to see” (John 9:19)?

“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. But how he can now see, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself” (John 9:20-21 NIV).

His parents answered this way because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already decided that anyone that acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That is why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

The Pharisees could not come to any satisfactory explanation of how the man had regained his sight; so they summoned the man for a second time and cautioned him,

“Give the glory to God; We know this man [Jesus] is a sinner” (John 9:34).

Whereupon the man replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see” (John 9:25 NIV)!

Then they started questioning him all over again, asking, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too” (John 9:27 NIV)? That enraged the Pharisees.

They hurled insults at the man and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from” (John 9:28-29 NIV).

The man answered, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing” (John 9:30-33 NAS).

This enraged the Pharisees even more. They said to the man, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us” (John 9:34 NIV); and the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue.

When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had thrown the man out of the synagogue, He went looking for him. When He found him, He asked the man,

“Do you believe
in the Son of Man?”

John 9:35b

The man asked, “Who is it, Lord, that I may believe in
him?”

Jesus said to him,

“You have seen Him,
and He is the one speaking with you.”

John 9:37

Then the man said, “I believe, Lord,” and he bowed
down before Jesus.

Jesus said,

“For judgment I came into this world,
so that those that do not see
may see
and those that see become blind.”

John 9:39

The Pharisees that were with Jesus heard Him say this,
and they asked, “What? Are we blind too” (John 9:40
NIV)?

Jesus replied,

“If you were blind,
you would have no sin;

but since you say, ‘We see,’
your sin remains.”

John 9:41 NAS

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Did the mud heal the man? Did the water in the Pool of Siloam heal him? What healed him?
2. Would the man have been healed if he had washed anywhere else, other than in the Pool of Siloam? Was there something ‘magical’ about the Pool of Siloam? Would he have been healed if he had not washed at all? What do you think?
3. Did the fact that Jesus opened the blind man’s eyes show that Jesus came from God? Was the man correct in saying. “If this man was not from God He could do nothing” (John 9:33)?
4. Was the formerly blind man right when he said that God does not hear sinners (John 9:31)? Does that mean that a sinner shouldn’t bother to pray? Does God sometimes hear and answer sinners’ prayers? What do you think? What type of prayer would God be most likely to respond to from a sinner?

5. The formerly blind man said, “But if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31). Was the man correct in this?

6. Will God be more likely to respond to the prayers of a God-fearing person, one who fears Him and does His will, than the prayers of a sinner? What do you think?

35. (109)
THE GOOD SHEPHERD
John 10:1-21

While Jesus was speaking to people at Jerusalem, He spoke of Himself in terms that should have suggested to His listeners that He was the Shepherd King, of whom the prophets Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34:23) and Micah (Micah 5:4) had spoken.

Jesus said,

“I tell you the truth,
the man who does not enter the sheep pen

by the gate,
but climbs over some other way,
is a thief and a robber.”

John 10:1

Jesus identified Himself as the “Shepherd” by coming to the people of Israel in the right way, or, as He put it, by coming to the “sheep” through “the gate.” He said,

“The man that comes in through the gate
is the shepherd of the sheep.”

John 10:2

Jesus then described what happens when the rightful shepherd is present. He said,

“The watchman opens the gate for him,
and the sheep listen to his voice.
He calls his own sheep by name
and leads them out.”

John 10:3 NIV

The proper function of a shepherd is to lead all the sheep out to pasture. He will go on ahead of them, and they will follow because they recognize the shepherd’s voice (John 10:4). Jesus said,

“But they will not follow a stranger;
in fact, they will flee from him
because they do not recognize
a stranger’s voice.”

John 10:5 NIV

Jesus used the analogy a shepherd, but His listeners did not seem to grasp what He meant (John 10:6). So He explained His function in a slightly different way. He compared Himself to “the gate” of the sheep pen. He said,

“I tell you the truth,
I am the gate for the sheep.

John 10:7 NIV

All who had come before Him (claiming to be the Messiah) were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them (John 10:8). He said,

“I am the gate;
whoever enters through me
will be saved.
He will come in and go out,
and find pasture.”

John 10:9 NIV

Next, Jesus contrasted himself with the people that had come before Him claiming to be the Christ, but were not. He said,

“The thief comes only to steal
and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.”

John 10:10 NIV

Jesus contrasted Himself also with people that are paid to do what they do. He said,

“I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life
for the sheep.
The hired hand is not the shepherd
who owns the sheep.
So when he sees the wolf coming,
he abandons the sheep and runs away.
Then the wolf attacks the flock
and scatters it.
The man runs away
because he is a hired hand
and cares nothing for the sheep.”

John 10:11-13 NIV

Jesus described His special relationship with the sheep. He said,

“I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me
and I know the Father.
And I lay down my life for the sheep

John 10:14-15 ISV

Next, Jesus spoke of “other sheep” that would come to believe on Him. He said,

“I have other sheep
that are not of this sheep pen.
I must bring them also.
They too will listen to my voice,
and there shall be one flock
and one shepherd.”

John 10:16 NIV

Finally, He spoke of His relationship with the Father,
saying,

“The reason my Father loves me
is that I lay down my life-
only to take it up again.
No one takes it from me,
but I lay it down of my own accord.
I have authority to lay it down
and authority to take it up again.

This command I received from my Father.”

John 10:17-18 NIV

These words caused further dissention among the
Jews. Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and
raving mad. Why listen to him” (John 10:20 NIV)?

Others said, “These are not the sayings of a man
possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the
blind” (John 10:21 NIV)?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. How did Jesus differ from leaders that were supposed to be shepherds of the people, but who served only for pay? See John 10:11-13.
2. What was the “gate” (John 10:1) through which Jesus came? What was the Messiah supposed to do when He came? See Isaiah 53:2-7. How did the fact that Jesus came through “the gate” identify Him as the Messiah?
3. Do you think that humble people today, who have good hearts, can recognize (John 10:4) the Good Shepherd’s voice as they read His words or hear His words read? How can they recognize His voice? How does His voice differ from the voice of others?
4. Jesus said He had “other sheep” (John 10:16). To whom was He referring? Was He referring to Gentiles that would come to believe on Him? What do you think?
5. How can Gentiles get into the flock and become one with Israel? What is the “gate” through which they have to go? See John 10:9.
6. Do sheep from the Gentiles form one flock with sheep from the house of Israel? See John 10:16. How many flocks does Jesus have?
7. Does the Good Shepherd know the names of His sheep? See John 10:3. If He knows their names, what does that indicate?

8. Was Jesus' life taken from Him or did He lay it down willingly? See John 10:18.

36. (110)
AN ATTEMPT TO STONE JESUS AT THE FEAST
OF DEDICATION
John 10:22-42

It was Jesus' last winter on earth and He was in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah).

As He was walking in Solomon's Colonnade, in the temple area (John 10:23), some of the Jews gathered around Him. They demanded to know, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24 NIV).

They either had not heard Jesus say that He was the "Good Shepherd" or they had not understood what He

meant (John 10:11,14). Otherwise, they would have known that He had implied that He was the Christ (the Messiah).

So Jesus answered,

“I have told you,
but you do not believe it.”

John 10:25a ISV

Then, He added,

“The works that I do
in my Father’s name
testify on my behalf,
but you do not believe
because you do not belong to my sheep.”

John 10:25b-26 ISV

His critics’ response to His teaching gave clear evidence that they did not belong to His sheep. Jesus said,

“My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them,
and they follow me.”

John 10:27 NIV

Concerning His sheep, He said,

“I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish;
no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

John 10:28 NIV

God was the one who had given the sheep to Jesus.

Jesus said,

“My Father,
who has given them to me,
is greater than all;
no one can snatch them out
of my Father’s hand.”

John 10:29 NIV

Then Jesus said,

“I and the Father are one.”

John 10:30 NIV

This last statement offended the Jews so deeply that they were prepared to take the law into their own hands. They lifted up stones with which to kill Jesus (John 10:31).

To which Jesus responded,

“I have shown you many good works
from my Father.
For which of them

are you going to stone me?”
John 10:32 ISV

They could not deny that Jesus had performed many great miracles, but they asserted,

“We are not going to stone you
for a good work but for blasphemy,
because you, a mere man,
are making yourself God!”

John 10:33 NIV

Whereupon, Jesus pointed out that the Old Testament sometimes referred to judges as “gods” (Psalm 82:6). Jesus asked,

“Is it not written in your Law,
‘I have said you are gods?’”

John 10:34 NIV

Then Jesus asked,

“If he called those
to whom the word of God came ‘gods’
(and the Scripture cannot be set aside),
how can you say to the one
whom the Father has consecrated
and sent into the world,
‘You are blaspheming,’
because I said,
‘I am the Son of God?’”

John 10:35-36 ISV

Then Jesus told them how they could determine whether or not He was speaking the truth. He said,

“If I am not doing my Father’s works,
do not believe me.
But if I am doing them,
even though you do not believe me,
believe the works,
so that you may know and understand
that the Father is in me
and I am in the Father.”

John 10:37-38 ISV

This pleased them even less; and they tried to seize Him, but He eluded their grasp (John 10:39).

After that, Jesus went back to the eastern side of the Jordan River, to the place where John the Baptist had baptized (John 10:40).

Jesus stayed there for a while, for it was still some weeks before He would go up to Jerusalem for the last time.

The Gospel of John records that many people came to Him during this period of time. Some of them said, “Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man is true” (John 10:41).

As a result, many people came to believe on Jesus at that place (John 10:42).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus said that the reason His critics did not believe Him was because they were not His (Jesus') sheep (John 10:26). Can everyone who desires to be one of Jesus' sheep become one? How do people act when they become His sheep? See John 10:27.
2. Can the devil snatch Jesus' sheep out of Jesus' hand? What do you think? See John 10:28-29.
3. In what sense were judges called "gods" in Psalm 82:6?
- 4. What are some of the "works" that Jesus was doing, which were similar to what God does? Do these "works" show that Jesus was working hand in hand with God?**

37. (111)

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

John 11:1-44

Mary and Martha lived at Bethany, which was not far from Jerusalem. They sent word to Jesus that Lazarus, their brother, was sick. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said,

"This sickness will not end in death.
No, it is for God's glory
so that God's Son
may be glorified through it."

John 11:4 NIV

In spite of His love for Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus stayed where He was on the eastern side of the Jordan River for two days before saying to His disciples,

“Let us go to Judea again.”

John 11:7

His disciples were surprised that He wanted to go back there so soon. They said, “Rabbi (Teacher), the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and you are going there again” (John 11:8)?

Jesus seemed confident that He could go back to Judea safely, as long as He was walking by the light that God gave Him. He said,

“Are there not twelve hours of daylight?
A man who walks by day will not stumble,
for he sees by this world’s light.
It is when he walks by night
that he stumbles,
for he has no light.”

John 11:9-10 NIV

Then He told His disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep and that He (Jesus) was going to Bethany to wake him up (John 11:11).

The disciples thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was sleeping a natural sleep, so they said, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will be better.”

Jesus replied,

“Lazarus is dead,
and for your sake I am glad I was not there,
so that you may believe.
But let us go to him.”

John 11:14b-15 NIV

Then Thomas said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16).

When Jesus got to Bethany, He found that Lazarus had been in the tomb already for four days. Many people had come to comfort Martha and Mary over their brother’s death.

When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. Martha gently chided Jesus, saying, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now, I know that God will grant you whatever you ask” (John 11:21-22 NIV).

Jesus said to her,

“Your brother will rise again.”

John 11:23 NIV

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24 NIV).

Jesus replied,

“I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live,
even though he dies.”

John 11:25 NIV

Then Jesus assured Martha that a believing person continues to live even though his body dies. Jesus said,

“And whoever lives and believes in me
will never die.

Do you believe this?”

John 1:26 NIV

Martha did not say that she understood this, but she did confirm her faith in Jesus. She said, “Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who comes into the world” (John 11:27).

After Martha had said this, she went back and called Mary and said to her privately, “The Teacher is here, and is asking for you.”

The moment Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Jesus. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

When the people in the house, who had been comforting Mary, noticed how quickly Mary got up and went out, they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to mourn.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at his feet and said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:32b NIV).

Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled when He saw Mary and the others weeping (John 11:33).

He asked,

“Where have you laid him?”

John 11:34 NIV

They replied, “Come and see, Lord.”

At that, Jesus wept (John 11:35).

Then the people said, “See how he loved him” (John 11:36)!

Some of them said, “Could not he, who opened the eyes of the blind man (John 9:7), have also kept this man from dying” (John 11:37 NIV)?

Jesus was again deeply moved (John 11:38).

He came to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone across the entrance. Jesus said,

“Take away the stone.”

John 11:39a

Martha warned, “Lord, by this time he smells bad, for he has been there four days.”

Jesus said to her,

“Did I not tell you that if you believed,
you would see the glory of God?”

John 11:40 NIV

So they took the stone away; and Jesus looked up and said,

“Father, I thank you that you have heard me.
I knew that you always hear me,
but I said this for the benefit
of the people standing here,

that they may believe that you sent me.”
John 11:41-42 NIV

Having said this, Jesus cried out with a loud voice,

“Lazarus, come out!”
John 11:43b NIV

Then Lazarus came out of the tomb. He had his hands and feet still bound in cloths and a handkerchief wrapped around his face.

Jesus said to them,

“Loose him and let him go.”
John 11:44b

Many of the Jews that had come to Mary saw what Jesus did and came to believe on Jesus; but some of them went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done (John 11:46).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Martha knew, of course, that every human being would be resurrected from the dead. She also knew when the resurrection would take place. When did she say it would take place? See John 11:24.
2. Does a believer cease to exist when that person's body dies? See what Jesus said in John 11:25-26.

3. Do you think Lazarus had to face death again after Jesus raised him back to life? Please explain your thinking.
4. If Jesus could raise the dead, what does that tell you about Jesus?

38. (112)
THE LEADERS PLOT TO KILL JESUS
John 11:45-57

The Jews, who had come to console Mary over the death of her brother, saw that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead; and many of them began to believe on Jesus (John 11:45). Some of them, however, went away to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done (John 11:46).

Upon hearing their report, the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin and asked, “What do we do? This man is performing many miraculous signs” (John 11:47).

They also said, “If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will come to believe on him and the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation” (John 11:48).

Then one of their number, a man named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said,

“You don’t know anything;
nor do you realize
that it is better for you
that one man die for the people

than that the whole nation perish.”

John 11:49b-50

The apostle John, who recorded this incident, wrote (John 11:51) that Caiaphas did not make this statement on His own. Since Caiaphas was the High Priest, he was actually making a prophecy that Jesus was going to die, not only for the nation of Israel, but also in order to gather the scattered children of God into it (John 11:52).

From that day forward the leaders plotted to kill Jesus (John 11:53), and Jesus could no longer freely move about among the Jews. Instead, He went away to a village called Ephraim, near a deserted area; and He and His disciples stayed there for a while (John 11:54).

For Jesus it must have been a time of reflection, introspection, and prayer, before the storm of conflict and suffering broke over Him.

Finally, the Jewish Passover was drawing near; and many people from the countryside went up to Jerusalem in order to cleanse themselves (John 11:55).

The people who came to Jerusalem for the Passover kept looking for Jesus. As they stood around in the temple area, they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the Feast at all” (John 11:56 NIV)?

The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if

anyone knew where Jesus was, he should report it so

they could seize Him (John 11:57).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the leaders of the nation of Israel understood what kind of a king the Messiah would be? Do you think the Romans would have cared whether or not the people of Israel accepted Jesus as their Messianic King, provided the people of Israel kept the peace and paid their taxes?
2. How did the High Priest think that Jesus' death would benefit the nation of Israel? Was the High Priest right about how Jesus' death would benefit the nation of Israel? In what way did Jesus' death benefit the nation of Israel?
3. The apostle John implied (John 11:52) that Caiaphas, the High Priest, had unknowingly prophesied that Jesus' death would cause the scattered children of God to be gathered into one nation (John 11:52). Did Jesus' death contribute to gathering the scattered children of God into one nation? If so, how did it do it? See Ephesians 3:6
4. Would the nation of Israel have been better off if the people of Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah? In what ways would they have been better off?

39. (113)

THE REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN

Matthew 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45; Luke 18:31-34

At last, the Passover was near; and the time had come for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem, where the leaders were anxious to put Him to death.

So a few days before the Passover, Jesus started off toward Jerusalem. He walked on ahead of His disciples, leading them. They were shocked, probably because He was going back there; and the people that followed were afraid (Mark 10:32).

Jesus called His twelve disciple's aside and explained that the prophecies about the Son of Man would be fulfilled (Luke 18:31). He said,

“We are going up to Jerusalem,
and the Son of Man will be betrayed
to the chief priests
and the teachers of the law.”

Matthew 20:18 NIV

He added,

“They will condemn him to death
and will hand him over to the Gentiles,
who will mock him and spit on him,
flog him and kill him.
Three days later he will rise.”

Mark 10:33b-34 NIV

His disciples did not comprehend the full significance of what Jesus was saying. Its meaning was hidden from them (Luke 18:34).

As they were underway, the mother of James and John, Zebedee's sons, came to Jesus with her sons (Matthew 20:20). They knelt down as though to ask a favor of Him.

“What do you want?” He asked.

They said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us what we are about to ask.”

Then He asked,

“What do you want me to do for you?”

Mark 10:36 NIV

The mother said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom” (Matthew 20:21 NIV).

Jesus replied,

“You don't know what you are asking.
Can you drink the cup I am about to drink
or be baptized with the baptism
I am about to be baptized with?”

Mark 10:38

“We can,” they answered.

Then Jesus said to them,

“You will indeed drink from my cup,
but to sit at my right or left

is not for me to grant.
These places belong to those
for whom they have been prepared
by my Father.”

Matthew 20:23 NIV

When the other ten Apostles heard what James and
John had requested, they were angry with them.
So Jesus called them all together and said,

“You know that
those who are regarded as
rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and their high officials
exercise authority over them.”

Mark 10:42 NIV

Jesus went on to explain that His followers were not to
be organized like the Gentiles. He said,

“Not so with you.
Instead, whoever
wants to become great among you
must be your servant,
and whoever wants to be first
must be slave of all.”

Mark 10:43-44 NIV

Jesus cited His own example as the pattern for His
disciples to follow. He said,

“For even the Son of Man did not come
to be served, but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
Mark 10:45 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus foretold a number of things that would happen to Him (Matthew 20:18-19 and Mark 10:33-34). How many of the things that Jesus foretold did actually happen to Him? Please list a few of them, if you can.
2. Were James and John (and their mother) seeking their personal advantage at a time when Jesus was on His way to lay down His life for others? Was their request especially ill timed? What do you think?
3. What was Jesus referring to when He asked, “Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am about to be baptized with” (Mark 10:38b)? What were the “cup” and the “baptism” to which He was referring?
4. What was Jesus referring to when He said, “You will indeed drink from my cup” (Matthew 20:23)? Was He referring to the death for James (Acts 12:2)? What do you think?

5. Is it proper for the organization of Christ's church to be patterned after the governments of this world, with layers of authority, each of which is presided over by one or more human beings? What do you think? See Mark 10:42.
6. How does a person become "great" among Jesus' followers?

40. (114)

BLIND MEN AT JERICHO

Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43

In spite of the fact that the leaders in Jerusalem were plotting to put Jesus to death, Jesus started up to the road to Jerusalem; and the road led through Jericho.

A large crowd of people was following along after Jesus (Matthew 20:29).

Now, two blind were sitting beside the road, where they were begging, as Jesus approached Jericho (Luke 18:35). They must have been sitting on the far side of the city, however, for Jesus encountered them as He was leaving Jericho (Matthew 20:29).

One of the blind men was named Bartimaeus (which means the Son of Timaeus) (Mark 10:46). When Bartimaeus heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. The people told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" (Luke 18:37).

So Bartimaeus and the other blind man shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matthew 20:30).

The crowd that led the way (Luke 18:38) rebuked (Matthew 20:31) the blind men and told them to be quiet; but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

At that, Jesus stopped and ordered Bartimaeus to be brought to Him (Luke 18:40).

The people said to Bartimaeus, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you” (Mark 10:49 NIV).

Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside, jumped to his feet and came to Jesus (Mark 10:50). Presumably, the other blind beggar came, too.

Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you” (Matthew 20:32)?

“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight” (Matthew 20:33 NIV).

Jesus felt pity on them and touched their eyes (Matthew 20:34) and said,

“Go, your faith has saved you.”

Mark 10:52

Immediately, they received their sight (Matthew 20:34) and began to follow Jesus, praising God (Luke 18:43); and all the people that saw it praised God, too (Luke 18:43).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Had the blind men heard about Jesus prior to this encounter with Him? What do you think? Did they believe that Jesus could help them?

2. When the blind men shouted, “Lord, Son of David,” what were they asserting about Jesus’ identity? Were they asserting that He was the Messianic King?
3. Did Jesus seem to be impressed with the conduct of the blind men? What was it about their conduct that impressed Him? What do you think?
4. Jesus said that the blind men’s faith had saved them (Mark 10:52). From what had their faith saved them? Did it save them being blind or did it save them from being lost in hell? What do you think?

41. (115)
ZACCHAEUS
Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and passed through it (Luke 19:1).

Now, there was a man in Jericho, known as Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and rich (Luke 19:2).

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see Him because he was a short man (Luke 19:3). So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore-fig tree in order to see Jesus, because Jesus was about to pass that way (Luke 19:4).

When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and, calling Zacchaeus by name, said to him,

“Zacchaeus, hurry, come down;
today I must stay at your house.”

Luke 19:5

So Zacchaeus climbed down hurriedly and welcomed Jesus with joy (Luke 19:6).

All the people who witnessed this said, “He has gone in to stay with a man who is a sinner” (Luke 19:7).

Zacchaeus, for his part, stood up and said, “Behold, I give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord! And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8).

Whereupon, Jesus commented,

“Today salvation has come to this house,
because also this man
is a son of Abraham.”

Luke 19:9

Then Jesus added,

“For the Son of Man came
to seek and to save what was lost.”

Luke 19:10 NIV

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What was it about Zacchaeus that made Jesus decide to stay at his house? Was it the intense interest that he manifested in Jesus? Was it his disregard for propriety

- in his pursuit of information about Jesus? What do you think?
2. Do you think Jesus' disciples stayed with Zacchaeus, too?
 3. Was Jesus equally as concerned about the salvation of rich people as He was about the salvation of poor people? Is it possible for a rich person to be saved? See Mark 10:27.
 4. Was it Zacchaeus' custom to give half his goods to the poor? Or was it a sudden decision, brought on by the presence of Jesus? What do you think?
 5. If it was a sudden decision, what do you think took place in Zacchaeus heart that made him decide to give half of his possessions to the poor? What made him decide to restore fourfold any money or goods that he may have taken unjustly? What do you think?
 6. What does the Law of Moses say about a person returning more than he took unjustly? See Exodus 22:1.

42. (116)

PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

Luke 19:11-27

While the people were still listening to Jesus at Zacchaeus' house, He taught them the Parable of the Pounds.

He taught them this parable because He was near to Jerusalem and some of them were thinking that the kingdom of God was about to appear (Luke 19:11).

The Parable of the Pounds is about a nobleman who went away to a distant country to get a kingdom for himself and then return (Luke 19:12).

The nobleman called ten of his slaves to him before He left and gave one mina of silver to each of them. A mina weighs about 16 ounces, which is about a pound.

The man said to his slaves, "Trade with this till I come back" (Luke 19:13).

The citizens, however, over whom the nobleman wanted to reign, hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, "We don't want this man to be our king" (Luke 19:14).

Yet, in spite of their opposition, the nobleman was appointed king.

When he returned as king, he summoned the slaves to whom he had given the silver. He wanted to find out how much they had gained by trading (Luke 19:15).

The first slave came and said, "Lord, your pound has earned ten pounds more" (Luke 19:16).

The king said,

"Well done, my good servant!
Because you have been trustworthy
in a very small matter,

take charge of ten cities.”

Luke 19:17 NIV

The second slave came and said, “Lord, your pound has earned five pounds more.”

To this one, the king said,

“And you, be over five cities.”

Luke 19:19

Then another servant came and said, “Lord, here is your pound, which I have kept safe in a handkerchief” (Luke 19:20). The servant explained, saying, “For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow” (Luke 19:21 NKJV).

At that, the king said,

“Out of your own mouth
I will judge you,
you wicked servant.
You knew that I was an austere man,
collecting what I did not deposit
and reaping what I did not sow.
Why then did you not
put my money in the bank,
that at my coming

I might have collected it with interest?”

Luke 19:22-23 NKJV

The king then said to those standing nearby,

“Take his pound from him
and give it to the one
who has ten pounds.”

Luke 19:24

They objected to this, saying, “Lord, he already has ten pounds!”

The king replied,

“I tell you that to everyone who has,
more will be given,
but as for the one who has nothing,
even what he has will be taken away.”

Luke 19:26 NIV

The king continued:

“But those enemies of mine
who did not want me
to be king over them
--bring them here
and slaughter them in front of me.”

Luke 19:27

After Jesus had taught this parable, He continued on His way toward Jerusalem (Luke 19:28).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Was Jesus a person of noble birth? Was He referring to Himself when He spoke of a nobleman, who was going away to receive a kingdom? What do you think?
2. Were many people of Jesus' day expecting (Luke 19:11) that the Messiah would reign on earth as a king? Did the people at Zacchaeus' house think that the Messiah's earthly reign was about to begin? What do you think?
3. Do you suppose that many of the people at Zacchaeus' house understood that it would be the church that would soon appear?
4. What can we learn from the Parable of the Pounds? Do we learn that we, as servants, should take advantage of the opportunities for service, which are given us? What do you think?
5. What is the value of an ounce of silver today? If each servant in this parable got one mina (pound) of silver, and if each mina (pound) has 16 ounces, how much money, in today's value, did the nobleman give to each slave to invest? Does this strike you as being a lot of money to invest or relatively little?
6. Does a disparity seem to exist between the amount of money given to each slave and the size of the reward. Does this disparity have anything to say to us?

43. (117)
MARY'S ANNOINTING OF JESUS' FEET
John 12:1-11

After Jesus had taught the Parable of the Pounds in Jericho, He and His disciples continued on the way to Jerusalem (Luke 19:28). They came to Bethany (Mark 11:1), which was about two miles from Jerusalem, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. There they spent the night. The Gospel of John says that Jesus visited Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1), which began on Friday that year. So Jesus' visit to Bethany must have been on the Sabbath.

Now, Bethany was where Jesus' friend, Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. At Bethany, an evening meal was prepared. Martha did the serving, and Lazarus reclined at table with Jesus and others.

While they were reclining, Mary brought about a pint (12 ounces) of very precious oil, which was perfumed with genuine nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, and the house was filled with its fragrance. Then she dried His feet with her own hair.

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would later betray Jesus, asked, "Why wasn't this perfumed oil sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor" (John 12:5)? (Now, three hundred denarii equaled about a year's wage, approximately 60 dollars.)

Judas said this, not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and carried the moneybag of the disciples and stole from it (John 12:6).

Defending Mary, Jesus told Judas,

“Leave her alone;
she has saved this
for the day of My burial.”

John 12:7

He also told Judas,

“The poor you have with you always,
but me you do not have always.”

John 12:8

Many people heard that Jesus was at Bethany; and a large crowd came, not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead (John 12:9).

Many of the children of Israel were starting to believe on Jesus because of Lazarus. For that reason, the chief priests laid plans to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 12:10-11).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think Mary had heard about the penitent woman, who anointed Jesus' feet at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-38)? Do you suppose Mary was intentionally imitating that woman?
2. Why did Mary anoint Jesus' feet? What was her motivation? Did she have the same motivation that the penitent woman had? What do you think?

3. Jesus said, “The poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always” (John 12:8). Did Jesus mean that there was no urgency in helping the poor? What do you think?
4. Do you think Judas intended to repay the money that he took from the common purse? If he did intend to repay it, would that excuse his actions? What do you think?
5. Would Jesus have forgiven Judas for stealing from their purse, if Judas had repented and confessed the sin? What do you think?