

DMI - St. Eugene University

(Run by sisters of Daughters of Mary Immaculate and Collaborators)



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(Social Sciences)

From the desk of

Dr. T. X. A. ANANTH, BBA, MSW, MBA, MPhil, PhD

President – University Council

Dear Student Teachers,

Greetings

On behalf of DMI – St. Eugene University, I welcome you to third semester of the fast track teacher training programme, 2015.

At this point, we at DMI – SEU need to thank the Lord Almighty for the strength we have gained to face the second year at IVDL with improved facilities and renewed energy. I am duty bound to express my gratitude for encouragement received from Rev. Fr. Dr. J. E. Arulraj, our Founder-Chancellor of DMI – St. Eugene University, for his moral support, the financial assistance and guidance.

These books form the learning materials for your course in the III Semester and supportive references which will help your teaching career. Each subject is mapped to the syllabus and discussed in detail for easy understanding of the texts. Our dedicated team works to create texts that will be an additional asset in your career as teaching faculty in your respective institutions.

I welcome each of you once again on behalf of our respected Chancellor, members of the faculty and on my own behalf to benefit from the programme and contribute effectively to serve Zambia to reach the level of development envisioned by the country's early freedom fighters and liberators during their years of struggle for independence. Your efforts will be appreciated in harnessing the natural resources to generate the financial wealth that will move Zambia forward in the eyes of the developed world.

It is our endeavour to help you all in building a modern Zambia, a country that is blessed with an abundance of human and natural resources. I wish you all the best there in your second year at IVDL.



Dr. T. X. A. ANANTH

President – University Council

S. NO.	Topics	Page Number
	<p style="text-align: center;">UNIT ONE: APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES OF JESUS</p> <p>Describe their experiences of being given a task to do and of being attracted to a particular career or way of life. - relate the stories in Luke's Gospel of Jesus' call of Simon Peter, James, John and of Levi, and compare these stories with modern Christians' experience of being called by Jesus. Distinguish between an apostle and a disciple of Jesus. — name the twelve apostles of Jesus. — describe the mission given by Jesus to the twelve apostles, -describe the mission of the seventy- two disciples sent out by Jesus, and compare it with the mission of the twelve apostles. — show, from the accounts of the missions of the twelve and of the seventy-two and from the replies of Jesus to would-be disciples and to Martha, the cost of being a disciple of Jesus. Identify qualities required by Jesus of his apostles and disciples and show how these qualities can be shown by followers of Jesus in modern Zambia. - - explain and illustrate the cost of following Jesus in modern Zambia. - describe the cost of being faithful to traditional Zambian values in modern Zambia. - describe the cost of being a faithful Hindu, a good Muslim or a true Humanist in Zambia today. — describe qualities required of a good Hindu, a good Muslim or a good Humanist and show how these qualities are expressed in modern Zambia. - describe the mission of disciples of Jesus today and compare it with the mission of Muslims and the mission of Hindus.</p>	6
	<p style="text-align: center;">UNIT TWO: JESUS' POWER OVER DISEASE AND NATURE</p> <p>Explain what a miracle is. give examples of events in Zambia which some people regard as miracle, list and illustrate reasons why Jesus performed miracles, relate the stories from Luke's Gospel of Jesus healing sick people (Simon's Mother-in-Law; The Paralytic; The man with the Withered Hand; The Centurion's Servant; The Man with Dropsy;</p>	45

	<p>UNIT THREE: JESUS' POWER OVER EVIL SPIRITS</p> <p>(LUKE 4: 31-37 & 41; 6: 18; 8: 26-39; 9: 37-43; 11: 14-26).</p> <p>State what they have heard about spirit possession in modern Zambia. — describe various attitudes to and treatment of different kinds of spirit possession in traditional and modern Zambia. - list various kinds of spirits believed in traditionally in Zambia.</p> <p>Relate the three stories of Jesus casting out evil spirits found in Luke's Gospel. - Explain the attitude of Jews at the time of Jesus towards pigs. - Describe the attitude towards spirit possession in Palestine at the time of Jesus. - show the connection between Jesus casting out evil spirits and the coming of the Kingdom of God. - compare the Christian attitudes to and treatment of spirit possession with other attitudes to and treatment of spirit possession. — distinguish between the Holy Spirit and other kinds of spirit in Christian teaching.</p>	93
	<p>UNIT FOUR: PARABLES</p> <p>(Mathew 21: 28-32; Luke 7: 41-43; 8: 4-15; 12: 16-21 & 42-48; Luke 13: 6-9; 15: 1-32; 17: 7-10).</p> <p>Give examples of stories they have heard used by teachers, preachers and other adults to teach or illustrate a point. - Explain and illustrate what a parable is. Relate the following parables: the Two Sons, the Money lender, the Sower, the Rich Fool, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost Son, the Faithful Servant, the Unfruitful Fig tree, the Servant's Duty.</p> <p>(for each of the Gospel parables related) explain the cultural and religious situation to which it refers, show what it teaches about God and about human behaviour and how it can be applied in modern Zambia. - explain and illustrate what Jesus used parables for. -compare the parables of Jesus with traditional Zambian proverbs used to teach or illustrate right behaviour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	139
	<p>UNIT FIVE: THE KINGDOM OF GOD</p> <p>Define the characteristics of a modern nation state and illustrate</p>	173

	<p>them from Zambia, stating who has more power, who has less power, who decided laws and policies and how citizenship is obtained. Explain the meaning of the phrase “the kingdom of God”. - Illustrate from the Gospels the following teachings about the Kingdom of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it has been brought into the world by Jesus; • the signs of it are freedom from sin, physical health and the defeat of evil powers; • entry is by repentance, faith in Jesus and obedience to Jesus; • it must be the most important thing in a person’s life; • it is for the poor, the hungry, the humble and • it is present in the world and is growing. <p>Contrast the characteristics of God’s Kingdom with the characteristics</p> <p>-show how Christians in Zambia today can show that God’s Kingdom is the most important thing in their lives. - compare the central ideas of Zambian Humanism, traditional Zambian belief, Hinduism and Islam with the Kingdom of God as the central idea of Christianity</p>	
References		

UNIT I**APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES OF JESUS**

Objectives;

- i. Describe the experiences of apostles and disciples.
- ii. Distinguish between an apostle and a disciple of Jesus.
- iii. Identify qualities required by Jesus of his apostles and disciples



Who do you think of when you think of “disciple”? We think of a lot of holy and wise men and women and all the Saints: People of great sacrifice, humility, compassion – people who pick up their cross and follow Jesus. of course, we also think of the 12 apostles. They were hand-picked by Jesus. They were the first disciples. They should be the model of discipleship.

In Christianity, the term disciple primarily refers to students of Jesus and is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels and Acts. The New Testament records many followers of Jesus during his ministry, but only some became disciples. Some disciples were given a mission, such as the Little Commission, Luke's commission of the 70, the Great Commission after the resurrection of Jesus, or the conversion of Paul, making them Apostles, charged with proclaiming the Good News (or Gospel) to the world.

A definition of disciple is suggested by Jesus' self-referential example from the Gospel of John 13:34-35: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (NRSV) Further definition by Jesus can be found

in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 14. Beginning with a testing trap laid out by his adversaries regarding observance of the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus uses the opportunity to lay out the problems with the religiosity of his adversaries against his own teaching by giving a litany of shocking comparisons between various, apparent socio-political and socio-economic realities versus the meaning of being his disciple.

Be transformed

“Discipleship” and “following Christ” are used synonymously. The canonical Gospels, Acts, and Epistles urge disciples to be imitators of Jesus Christ or of God himself. Being imitators requires obedience exemplified by moral behavior. With this biblical basis, Christian theology teaches that discipleship entails transformation from some other World view and practice of life into that of Jesus Christ, and so, by way of Trinitarian theology, of God himself.

The Apostle Paul stressed transformation as a prerequisite for discipleship when he wrote that disciples must “not be conformed to this world” but must “be transformed by the renewing of [their] minds” so that they “may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2 NRSV) Therefore a disciple is not simply an accumulator of information or one who merely changes moral behavior in conformity with the teachings of Jesus Christ, but seeks a fundamental shift toward the ethics of Jesus Christ in every way, including complete devotion to God.

In several Christian traditions, the process of becoming a disciple is called the Imitation of Christ. This concept goes back to the Pauline Epistles: “be imitators of God” (Ephesians 5:1) and “be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”(1 Corinthians 11:1). The The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis promoted this concept in the 14th century.

The Gospel of Mark can be divided into two main sections: The public ministry of Jesus; and the road to Calvary. These two sections are divided geographically: The first part takes place almost entirely in the north of Israel, in the Galilee region. This is where Nazareth, Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee are. This is where Jesus grew up and where all the apostles were from. The second part takes place in Jerusalem: the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, the last supper, the agony in the garden, the betrayal and the passion, death and resurrection. All that takes place in Jerusalem. And the transition between these two sections happens as Jesus and his disciples, literally walk all the way from the northernmost point, Caesarea Philippi some 200kms down to Jerusalem, which is in the south. And this journey to Jerusalem is very much a transition from Jesus’ public ministry of healing, teaching and nourishing people to what had to happen on the Cross. This is where we’ve been in the Gospel of Mark for the last three weeks and we’re going to be here until the end of October (From 7:22-10:52). During this journey, three times Jesus tells the disciples what has to happen, but the disciples just don’t get it.

Peter shows great faith at the beginning of that journey at Caesarea Philippi with his proclamation of faith, when Jesus asks “who do you say that I am?” Peter responds, “You are

the Christ,” and not two seconds later when Jesus tells them that he has to be handed over to the authorities, suffer and die, Peter rebukes him and Jesus calls him Satan.

During this journey we also see the disciples not letting the children come to Jesus and the disciples arguing about who of them is the greatest. They can't cast out a demon and can't figure out why and James and John ask Jesus if they can sit at his right and left in Heaven. Then John tries to stop someone else who is casting out demons in Christ's name because he's not one of their group. To all of this, I imagine Jesus saying, “really?”

But it's comforting to know that this has been human nature since the beginning. We hear in the Book of Numbers that Moses was dealing with the same issue. Moses complains to God that he can't handle all the Israelites by himself and God tells him to select 70 men, elders in the community to help him. He says to take them to the Tent – that's the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept – and God would take some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the 70 elders. So they go to the Tent and God sends his Spirit upon the elders and they begin to prophesy for a bit and then they stop. But two of them, Eldad and Medad, had not gone to the Tent, they stayed in the Camp, they still received the Spirit and began to prophesy and they continued to prophesy. Joshua tells Moses that Eldad and Medad are prophesying but they didn't go to the Tent and asks if they stop them. Moses says, “Would that all God's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit on them.” (Numbers 11:29)

Aren't we the same? Proud, insecure, jealous and petty? At home, at work, at school, in our clubs and Parish groups? We don't want to go to a particular social justice event because they are not “pro-life”, or to a worship event because they are not Catholic. Really? Jesus says that if we truly are Christian, we're all on the same team. And if we feel that we are not good enough because we struggle with humility and jealousy and we don't understand the Cross, we're in good company, 'cause that's exactly where the 12 apostles were on the road to Jerusalem. If they were chosen as disciples, so can we be. God calls everyone. We don't need to be perfect to be disciples, we just need to have faith.

And yes, faith is a gift. We have to pray for it. We have to ask for it. But having faith doesn't mean that we don't have doubts or that we understand everything the Church teaches. To be faithful disciples means that we're in the Church, trying. Who do we think of when we think of disciples? We should think of ourselves. Not because you're perfect, but because you're not perfect. You're just like me, struggling just have to have faith.

Disciples are people who have “God's love ... poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5). Disciples “love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength” (Mark 12:30). God is the joy of our heart and the desire of our soul ...

Disciples are therefore happy in God, indeed, always happy, as having “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14), and overflowing their soul with peace and joy. “Perfect love” having now “cast out fear,” they “rejoice evermore” (1 John 4:18). They “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4), even “in God their Savior;” and in the Father, “through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:11).

Therefore, disciples cheerfully receives all from God saying, “Good is the will of the Lord.” Whether the Lord gives or takes away, they equally bless the Lord’s name. ... Knowing that as “every good gift comes from above” (James 1:17), so nothing but good can come from the Lord of the Universe into whose hand they have wholly committed their bodies and souls as into the hands of a faithful Creator. They are therefore careful (anxiously or uneasy) for nothing.

Disciples “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is their way of life. Not that they are always in the house of prayer. However, they neglects no opportunity of being there. Neither are they always on their knees, although they often are, or on their face, before the Lord their God. ... They continually walk with God, having the loving eye of their minds firmly fixed upon God, and everywhere “seeing Him that is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27).

And while disciples always exercises their love of God by unceasing prayer and rejoicing, and giving thanks in everything, this commandment is written in their hearts, “those who love God must love their brother and sister also” (1 John 4:21b). And they accordingly love their neighbor as themselves. They love every person as their own soul. Their hearts are full of love to all humankind, to every child of “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Numbers 16:22).

For disciples are “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8). The love of God has purified their hearts from all vengeful passions, envy, malice, wrath, and every unkind attitude or evil desire. It has cleansed them from pride and the arrogance of spirit that leads to contention. And they have “put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12).

Agreeable to this their one desire, is the one pattern of a disciple’s life, namely, “not to do their own will, but the will of God that sent them” (John 6:38). Their one intention at all times and in all things is to please God whom their soul loves. They do not seek to please themselves.

Disciples keep God’s commandments because they love God. They keep not some, or most of them, but all; from the least to the greatest. ... Whatever God has forbidden they avoid. Whatever God has commanded they do, whether it is small or great, hard or easy, joyous or causes suffering. They run the way of God’s commandments.

Accordingly, disciples keep all the commandments of God with all their might. For their obedience is in proportion to their love, the source from which it flows. Therefore, loving God with all their heart, they serve God with all their strength. Disciples consistently presents their souls and bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Romans 12:1).

Consequently, whatever disciples do, it is all to the glory of God. ... Their one invariable rule is this, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

Nor do the customs of the world at all hinder disciples "running the race that is set before them" (Hebrews 12:1). ... But "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable" (Philippians 4:8), they think, and speak, and do, "glorifying the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things" (Titus 2:10).

Lastly, as disciples have time, they "do good to all people" (Galatians 6:10). They serve neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies in every possible kind. They do good to their bodies by "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting those who are sick or in prison" (Matthew 25:37-40). But they don't stop there. Disciples also work to do good to their souls, according to the ability that God gives.

By these marks, by these fruits of a living faith, we seek to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world and from all those whose minds or lives are not in accord with the Gospel of Christ. But we earnestly desire to not be distinguished at all from real Christians, of whatever denomination, nor from any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). And I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, that we be in no way divided among ourselves. Is your heart right as my heart is with yours? I ask no nothing more. If it is so, give me your hand. Let us not destroy the work of God for opinions or words. Do you love and serve God? It is enough. I give you the right hand of fellowship. If there is any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any compassion, let us strive together for the faith of the Gospel. Let us walk together as those who are worthy of the vocation to which we are called. "Let us live and serve with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, watching over one another in love. Seeking to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we remember there is one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called with one hope of our calling. There is...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:2-6)."

Females that followed Jesus

In Luke (10:38–42), Mary, sister of Lazarus is contrasted with her sister Martha, who was "cumbered about many things" while Jesus was their guest, while Mary had chosen "the better part," that of listening to the master's discourse. John names her as the "one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair" (11:2). In Luke, an unidentified "sinner" in the house of a Pharisee⁸ anoints Jesus' feet. Any pre-existing relationship between Jesus and Lazarus himself, prior to the miracle, is unspecified by John. In Catholic folklore, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is seen as the same as Mary Magdalene.

Luke refers to a number of people accompanying Jesus and the twelve. From among them he names three women: "Mary, called Magdalene, ... and Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources" (Luke 8:2-3). Mary Magdalene and Joanna are among the women who went to prepare Jesus' body in Luke's account of the resurrection, and who later told the apostles and other disciples about the empty tomb and words of the "two men in dazzling clothes". Mary Magdalene is the most well-known of the disciples outside of the Twelve. More is written in the gospels about her than the other female followers. There is also a large body of lore and literature covering her.

Other gospel writers differ as to which women witness the crucifixion and witness to the resurrection. Mark includes Mary, the mother of James and Salome (not to be confused with Salomé the daughter of Herodias) at the crucifixion and Salome at the tomb. John includes Mary the wife of Clopas at the crucifixion.

Apostles



According to the Bible's New Testament, the Apostles were the primary disciples of Jesus, the central figure in Christianity. The word "apostle" comes from the Greek word and originally meaning "messenger, envoy". During the life and ministry of Jesus in the first century AD, the apostles were his closest followers and became the primary teachers of the gospel message of Jesus. The word "disciple" is sometimes used interchangeably with "apostle" – for instance the Gospel of John makes no distinction between the two terms. In

modern usage, prominent missionaries are identified as apostles – a practice which stems from the Latin equivalent of apostle, *missio*, the source of the English word "missionary".

While Christian tradition often refers to the apostles as being twelve in number, different gospel writers give different names for the same individual, and apostles mentioned in one gospel are not mentioned in another. The commissioning of the Twelve Apostles during the ministry of Jesus is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. After his resurrection, Jesus sent eleven of them (minus Judas Iscariot, who by then had died) by the Great Commission to spread his teachings to all nations—an event referred to as the "Dispersion of the Apostles". There is also an Eastern Christian tradition derived from the Gospel of Luke of there being as many as Seventy Apostles during the time of Jesus' ministry. Prominent figures in early Christianity were often called apostles even though their ministry or mission came after the life of Jesus.

The period of Early Christianity during the lifetimes of the apostles is called the Apostolic Age. During the first century, the apostles established churches throughout the territories of the Roman Empire and according to tradition through the Middle East, Africa, India, and modern-day Ukraine. The apostle Paul, a Jew named Saul of Tarsus, is considered "the apostle of the Gentiles", for his missions to spread the gospel message after his conversion. Although not one of the apostles commissioned during the life of Jesus, Paul claimed a special commission from the resurrected Jesus. In his writings, the epistles to Christian churches established throughout the Levant Paul did not restrict the term "apostle" to the Twelve, and often refers to his mentor Barnabas as an apostle.

By the second century AD, association with the apostles was esteemed as evidence of authority and such churches are known as Apostolic Sees. Paul's epistles were accepted as scripture, and two of the four gospels were associated with apostles, as were other New Testament works. Various Christian texts, such as the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, were attributed to the apostles. Bishops traced their lines of succession back to individual apostles, who were said to have dispersed from Jerusalem and established churches across great territories. Christian bishops have traditionally claimed authority deriving, by apostolic succession, from the Twelve. Early Church Fathers who came to be associated with apostles, such as Pope Clement I with Peter the Apostle, are referred to as Apostolic Fathers. The Apostles' Creed, popular in the West, was said to have been composed by the apostles themselves. The Twelve Apostles are also called the Twelve Disciples. Several Christian and local traditions honour major missionaries as apostles—for example, Saint Patrick (AD 373–463) as "Apostle of Ireland" or Saint Boniface (680–755) as "Apostle to the Germans".

In the New Testament, the names of the majority of the apostles are Hebrew names, although some had Greek names. Even Paul, the "apostle₁₀ of the Gentiles", who said that Jesus revealed himself to him only after his ascension and appointed him to his mission, was a Jew by birth and proud of it, although after his conversion he adopted the Roman cognomen Paulus, rendered in English as Paul, as his name. Paul claimed with much insistency this title and its

rights, and made his case to the Corinthian Church that he was an apostle by the evidence of God's power working through him.

Mark 6:7-13 states that Jesus initially sent out these twelve in pairs (cf. Mt 10:5-42, Lk 9:1-6) to towns in Galilee. The text states that their initial instructions were to heal the sick and drive out demons. They are also instructed to "take nothing for their journey, except a staff only: no bread, no wallet, no money in their purse, but to wear sandals, and not put on two tunics", and that if any town rejects them they ought to shake the dust off their feet as they leave, a gesture which some scholars think was meant as a contemptuous threat (Miller 26). Their carrying of just a staff (Matthew and Luke say not even a staff) is sometimes given as the reason for the use by Christian bishops of a staff of office, in those denominations that believe they maintain an apostolic succession.

Later in the Gospel narratives the twelve apostles are described as having been commissioned to preach the Gospel to "all the nations," regardless of whether Jew or Gentile. Paul emphasized the important role of the apostles in the church of God when he said that the household of God is "built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone".

Each of the four listings of apostles in the New Testament (Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 10:1-4, Luke 6:12-16, and Acts 1:13) indicate that all the apostles were men. While the names vary in the four lists, the male identity is uniform. Classicist Evelyn Stagg and theologian Frank Stagg argue that this is strong evidence against Jesus viewing women and men as equals.

The 12 Apostles

We find the names of the 12 apostles in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, and Luke 6:13-16:

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Simon, whom he named **Peter**, and **Andrew** his brother, and **James** and **John**, and **Philip**, and **Bartholomew**, and **Matthew**, and **Thomas**, and **James the son of Alphaeus**, and **Simon** who was called the Zealot, and **Judas** [also called Thaddeus or Jude] the son of James, and **Judas Iscariot**, who became a traitor.

Jesus Christ selected 12 men from among his early followers to become his closest disciples. After an intensive discipleship course and following his resurrection from the dead, the Lord fully commissioned the apostles (Matthew 28:16-2, Mark 16:15) to advance God's kingdom and carry the gospel message to the world.

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These men became the pioneering leaders of the New Testament church, but they were not without faults and shortcomings. Interestingly, not one of the chosen 12 disciples was a scholar or rabbi. They had no extraordinary skills. Neither religious, nor refined, they were ordinary people, just like you and me.

But God chose them for a purpose—to fan the flames of the gospel that would spread across the face of the earth and continue to burn bright throughout the centuries to follow. He selected and used each of these regular guys to carry out his exceptional plan.

Take a few moments now to learn a lesson or two from the 12 apostles—men who helped ignite the light of truth that still dwells within our hearts today and calls us to come and follow Jesus Christ.



Peter's Denial. Getty Images

1. Peter

Without question, the Apostle Peter was a "duh"-ciple most of us can identify with. One minute he was walking on water by faith, and the next he was sinking in doubts. Impulsive and emotional, Peter is best known for denying Jesus when the pressure was on. Even so, as a disciple he was dearly loved by Christ, holding a special place among the twelve.

Peter, often a spokesman for the twelve, stands out in the Gospels. Whenever the men are listed, Peter's name is first. He, James, and John formed the inner circle of Jesus' closest companions. These three alone were given the unique privilege of experiencing the transfiguration, along with a few other extraordinary revelations of Jesus.

After the resurrection of Christ, Peter became a bold evangelist and missionary, and one of the greatest leaders of the early church. Passionate until the end, historians record that when Peter was sentenced to death by crucifixion, he requested that his head be turned toward the ground because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as his Savior.



Tradition says Andrew died a martyr on a Crux Decussata, or X-shaped cross.

2. Andrew

The Apostle Andrew abandoned John the Baptist to become the first follower of Jesus of Nazareth, but John didn't mind. He knew his mission was to point people to the Messiah.

Like many of us, Andrew lived in the shadow of his more famous sibling, Simon Peter. Andrew led Peter to Christ, then stepped into the background as his boisterous brother became a leader among the apostles and in the early church.

The Gospels don't tell us a great deal about Andrew, but we can read between the lines and find a person who thirsted for truth and found it in the living water of Jesus Christ. Discover how a simple fisherman dropped his nets on the shore and went on to become a remarkable fisher of men.



The Apostle James by Rembrandt, 1661.

3. James

James the son of Zebedee, often called James the Greater to distinguish him from the other apostle named James, was a member of Jesus Christ's inner circle, which included his brother, the Apostle John, and Peter. Not only did James and John earn a special nickname from the Lord—"sons of thunder"—they were privileged to be at the front and center of three supernatural events in the life of Christ. In addition to these honors, James was the first of the twelve to be martyred for his faith in A.D. 44.



'Vision of St John the Evangelist', 1937.

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4. John

The Apostle John, brother to James, was nicknamed by Jesus one of the "sons of thunder," but he liked to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." With his fiery temperament and special devotion to the Savior, he gained a favored place in Christ's inner circle.

John's enormous impact on the early Christian church and his larger-than-life personality, make him a fascinating character study. His writings reveal contrasting traits. For instance, on the first Easter morning, with his typical zeal and enthusiasm, John raced Peter to the tomb after Mary Magdalene reported that it was now empty. Although John won the race and bragged about this achievement in his Gospel (John 20:1-9), he humbly allowed Peter to enter the tomb first.

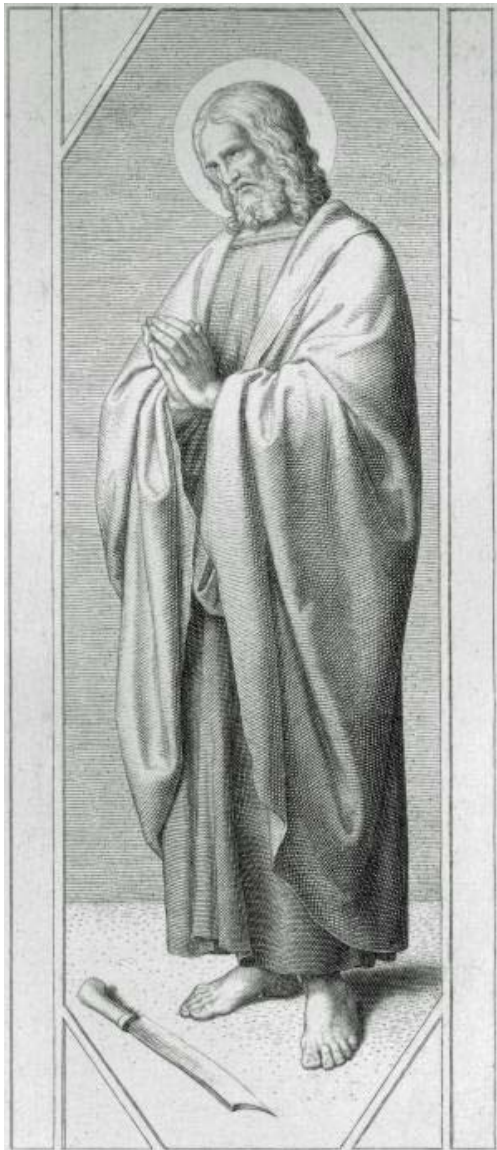
According to tradition, John outlived all of the disciples, dying of old age in Ephesus, where he preached a gospel of love.



Engraving of the Apostle Philip.

5. Philip

Philip was one of the first followers of Jesus Christ, and he wasted no time calling others, like Nathanael, to do the same. Although little is known about him after the ascension of Christ, Bible historians believe Philip preached the gospel in Phrygia, in Asia Minor, and died a martyr there at Hierapolis. Learn how Philip's search for the truth led him directly to the promised Messiah.



Engraving of the Apostle Nathanael.

6. Nathanael or Bartholomew

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Nathanael, believed to be the disciple Bartholomew, experienced a jarring first encounter with Jesus. When the Apostle Philip called him to come and meet the Messiah, Nathanael was skeptical, but he followed along anyway. As Philip introduced him to Jesus, the Lord

declared, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Immediately Nathanael wanted to know, "How do you know me?"

Jesus got his attention when he answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Well, that stopped Nathanael in his tracks. Shocked and surprised he declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Nathanael garnered only a few lines in the Gospels, nevertheless, in that instant he became a loyal follower of Jesus Christ.

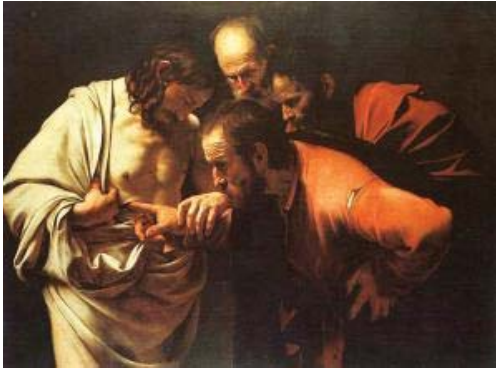


Jesus calling Matthew, a taxman, to follow him and become a disciple.

7. Matthew

Levi, who became the Apostle Matthew, was a customs official in Capernaum who taxed imports and exports based on his own judgment. The Jews hated him because he worked for Rome and betrayed his countrymen.

But when Matthew the dishonest tax collector heard two words from Jesus, "Follow me," he left everything and obeyed. Like us, he longed to be accepted and loved. Matthew recognized Jesus as someone worth sacrificing for. Find out why, 2,000 years later, Matthew's eyewitness Gospel still sounds an irresistible call.

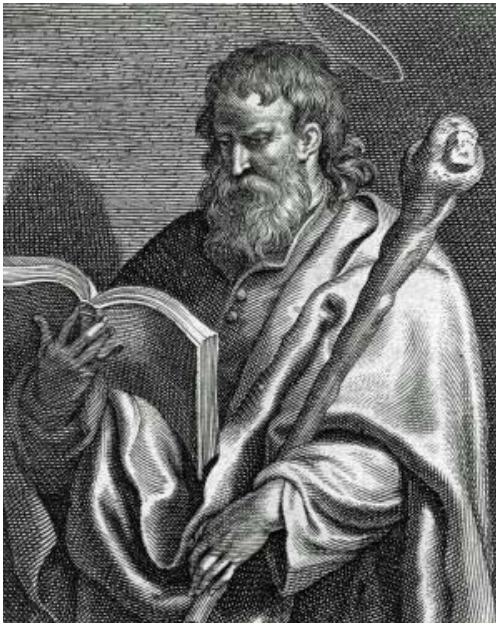


'The Incredulity of Saint Thomas' by Caravaggio.

8. Thomas

The Apostle Thomas is often referred to as "Doubting Thomas" because he refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw and touched Christ's physical wounds. As far as disciples go, however, history has dealt Thomas a bum rap. After all, each of the 12 apostles, except John, abandoned Jesus during his trial and death at Calvary.

Thomas, like us, was prone to extremes. Earlier he had demonstrated courageous faith, willing to risk his own life to follow Jesus into Judea. There is an important lesson to be gained from studying Thomas: If we're truly seeking to know the truth, and we're honest with ourselves and others about our struggles and doubts, God will faithfully meet us and reveal himself to us, just as he did for Thomas.



The Apostle James the Less reading. Photo:

9. James the Less

James the Less is one of the most obscure apostles in the Bible. The only things we know for certain are his name and that he was present in the upper room of Jerusalem after Christ ascended to heaven.

In *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur suggests that his obscurity may have been the distinguishing mark of his life. Discover why James the Less' complete anonymity may reveal something profound about his character.

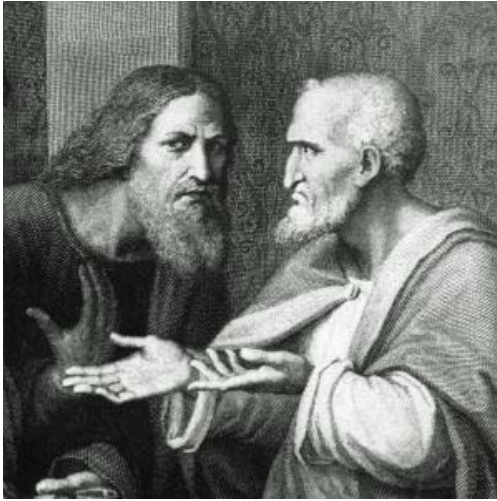


From left to right: Matthew, Thaddeus (Jude), and Simon the Zealot at the last supper in Jerusalem.

10. Simon the Zealot

Who doesn't like a good mystery? Well, the Scriptures introduce us to quite a few riddles that scholars have yet to solve. One of those puzzling questions is the exact identity of Simon the Zealot, the Bible's own mystery apostle.

Scripture tells us almost nothing about Simon. In the Gospels, he is mentioned in three places, but only to list his name. In Acts 1:13 we learn that he was present with the apostles in the upper room of Jerusalem after Christ had ascended to heaven. Beyond those few details, we can only speculate about Simon and his designation as a Zealot.



The Apostle Thaddeus (on left) and Simon the Zealot.

11. Thaddeus or Jude

Listed together with Simon the Zealot and James the Less, the Apostle Thaddeus completes a grouping of the least known disciples. Thaddeus, also known as Jude, is characterized as a tender-hearted, gentle man who displayed childlike humility.

Scholars believe Thaddeus wrote the book of Jude. It's a short epistle, but the closing two verses contain a beautiful doxology, one of the finest expressions of praise to God in the entire New Testament.



In remorse, Judas Iscariot throws down the 30 pieces of silver he received in payment for betraying Christ.

12. Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot is the apostle who betrayed his Master with a kiss. For this supreme act of treachery, some would say Judas Iscariot made the greatest error in history.

Down through time, people have had strong or mixed feelings about Judas. Some experience a sense of hatred toward him, others feel pity, and some have even considered him a hero. No matter how you react to him, one thing is certain, believers can benefit greatly by taking a serious look at his life.

Seventy-two Disciples

When we read the Bible, one of the most important things that we need to do is to read it typologically. A biblical type is any person, place, thing, or event that pre-figures something that comes later and becomes its fulfillment (antitype). Thus, one who reads the Bible typologically “discerns in God’s works of the Old Covenant prefiguration of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.” In the Bible, an example of a type would be Moses. Moses went up the Mountain of Sinai and received the Law of God and gave to the people of Israel the Law of the Kingdom. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus ascends a mountain and delivers to the people the New Law of the Kingdom. Thus, in theology we speak of Moses as a type of Christ because he pre-figures what Jesus eventually would fulfill. There are many examples in the Bible of such types, people like

David, the great King, who provide the pattern for what the Messiah eventually would fulfill. In the Gospel from this past Sunday we read of the 72 disciples who were sent out by Jesus to proclaim His message. Why 72? What is significant about this number? Think back to what we said about the importance of typology. The symbolism of such a number is not accidental. In the Old Testament book of Numbers, we read of Moses having selected 70 elders to assist him in carrying out his work. These 70 elders came to Moses and were anointed for service. We read, “So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. Gathering seventy elders of the people, he had them stand around the tent. The LORD then came down in the cloud and spoke to him. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, he bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.” (Numbers 11:24-25.) However, there were two additional men who were chosen to go up to the tent with the others: “two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp.” (Numbers 11:26.) Thus, the number of elders who are anointed by the LORD to assist Moses in his work among the people of Israel is actually 72.

Jesus, in choosing the 72, is making the connection with Moses, demonstrating that the work He is doing is in continuity with the Old Testament story and as such He is fulfilling the Old Testament message. This is also why Jesus chooses twelve Apostles. Why twelve? Because the twelve Apostles are the spiritual re-gathering of the twelve tribes of Israel. Just as the twelve tribes were the natural and biological source of Israel’s life, the twelve Apostles become the spiritual and supernatural source of the Church’s life.

How Can We Be True Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?



Discipleship is what the Christian life is all about. But how do we know when we are true disciples? And how do we know when we have trained someone else to be a disciple?
 “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”(Matthew 28:20).

What does it mean to keep Christ’s commands?



The Greek word translated keep is tereo, which means “to guard, to watch, to observe closely, to hold fast.” This same word is used to describe the care that the Philippian jailer was to exercise in keeping Paul and Silas from escaping.

During the times of wind-driven ships, navigators would use the phrase keeping the stars. This meant that they would use the stars to chart a course across the ocean. This is precisely how the commands of Christ are to be used: as dependable lights for charting a course throughout life.

The Awesome Rewards of Keeping Christ’s Commands

The great importance of keeping all of Christ’s commands before our eyes is indicated by the marvelous rewards He promises to those who do it. Notice the foundational areas of the Christian life and of our relationship to the Lord that result from keeping His commandments.

Showing Our Love for Christ

“If ye love me, keep my commandments”(John 14:15).

Abiding in God’s Love

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love”(John 15:10).

Perfecting God’s Love

“Who so keepeth is word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him”(I John 2:5).

Having God Live Within Us

“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”(John 14:23).

Experiencing God’s Love

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father...”(John 14:21).

Knowing Christ Intimately

“...And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”(John 14:21). “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”(I John 2:3).

Being a Truthful Witness

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”(I John 2:4).

Being a Friend of Jesus

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants... for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”(John 15:14–15).

Having All Prayers Answered

“Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”(I John 3:22).

Bearing Much Fruit

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”(John 15:7–8).

25

Being Joyful at All Times

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”(John 15:11).

Cleansing the Heart and Soul

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you”(John 15:3–4). “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”(John 17:17).

Loving One Another

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”(I John 5:2–3).

Being a True Disciple

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”(John 13:34–35).

Demonstrating Ultimate Love

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”(John 15:12–13).

Obedying the Great Commission

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”(Matthew 28:19–20).

Qualities That Can Help You Make Disciples in Modern Zambia

“Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations.”—MATTHEW 28:19.

JEHOVAH’S servants must sometimes develop skills and attitudes that will help them to do his will. At God’s command, for instance, Abraham and Sarah left the prosperous city of Ur and eventually needed the qualities and abilities required of tent dwellers. (Hebrews 11:8, 9, 15) Leading the Israelites into the Promised Land demanded that Joshua have courage, confidence in Jehovah, and knowledge of his Law. (Joshua 1:7-9) And whatever skills Bezalel and Oholiab may already have had were certainly enhanced or further developed by God’s spirit so that those men could successfully share in and oversee the construction of the tabernacle and related work.—Exodus 31:1-11.

Centuries later, Jesus Christ gave his followers this commission: “Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) Never before had people been given the privilege of doing

anything quite like this. What qualities are needed for the disciple-making work? How can we cultivate such traits?

Manifest Deep Love for God

Approaching people and endeavoring to persuade them to worship the true God requires that we have deep love for Jehovah. The Israelites could prove their love for God by wholeheartedly obeying his commandments, offering acceptable sacrifices, and extolling him in song. (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; 30:19, 20; Psalm 21:13; 96:1, 2; 138:5) As disciple makers, we too keep God's laws, but we also express our love for Jehovah by telling others about him and his purposes. We need to speak with conviction, choosing the right words to express our heartfelt feelings about our God-given hope.—1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Peter 3:15.

Because he had deep love for Jehovah, Jesus found great pleasure in talking about God's purposes, the Kingdom, and true worship. (Luke 8:1; John 4:23, 24, 31) In fact, Jesus said: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) These words of the psalmist apply to Jesus: "To do your will, O my God, I have delighted, and your law is within my inward parts. I have told the good news of righteousness in the big congregation. Look! My lips I do not restrain. O Jehovah, you yourself know that well."—Psalm 40:8, 9; Hebrews 10:7-10.

Motivated by love for God, new ones who have just learned Bible truth sometimes speak about Jehovah and the Kingdom with such conviction that they are quite effective in convincing others to examine the Scriptures. (John 1:41) Love for God is the key factor that motivates us to engage in the disciple-making work. Let us therefore keep that love alive by regularly reading and meditating on his Word.—1 Timothy 4:6, 15; Revelation 2:4.

Love for Jehovah unquestionably helped to make Jesus Christ a zealous teacher. But that was not the only reason for his effectiveness as a Kingdom proclaimer. What, then, is another quality that made Jesus a successful disciple maker?

Show Loving Concern for People

Jesus was concerned about people and showed keen interest in them. Even during his prehuman existence as God's "master worker," he was fond of things associated with mankind. (Proverbs 8:30, 31) As a man on earth, Jesus had compassion for people, refreshing those who came to him. (Matthew 11:28-30) Jesus reflected Jehovah's own love and compassion, and this attracted people to the worship of the only true God. Individuals of all kinds listened to Jesus because he showed loving concern for them and their circumstances.—Luke 7:36-50; 18:15-17; 19:1-10.

When a certain man asked what he needed to do to inherit everlasting life, "Jesus looked upon him and felt love for him." (Mark 10:17-21) Concerning certain individuals taught by Jesus at Bethany, we read: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." (John 11:1, 5) Jesus cared so much about people that he gave up needed rest in order to teach them. (Mark

6:30-34) Such deep and loving concern for fellow humans made Jesus more effective than anyone else in drawing individuals to true worship.

The apostle Paul too was deeply concerned about people to whom he preached. For instance, he told those who had become Christians in Thessalonica: “Having a tender affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you, not only the good news of God, but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.” As a result of Paul’s loving efforts, some in Thessalonica ‘turned away from their idols to slave for the living God.’ (1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:8) If we have genuine concern for people, as Jesus and Paul did, we too may experience the joy of seeing the good news reach the hearts of those “rightly disposed for everlasting life.”—Acts 13:48.

DisplayaSelf-SacrificingSpirit

Effective disciple-makers have a self-sacrificing spirit. They surely do not view the acquisition of wealth to be of utmost importance. In fact, Jesus told his disciples: “How difficult a thing it will be for those with money to enter into the kingdom of God!” The disciples were surprised to hear this, but Jesus added: “Children, how difficult a thing it is to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:23-25) Jesus recommended a simple way of life to his followers in order for them to concentrate on making disciples. (Matthew 6:22-24, 33) Why does a spirit of self-sacrifice help us to make disciples?

Teaching all the things Jesus commanded requires much effort. A disciple-maker generally strives to conduct a Bible study with an interested person every week. To increase their opportunities of finding sincere ones, some Kingdom proclaimers have changed from full-time to part-time employment. Thousands of Christians have learned another language in order to reach certain ethnic groups in their area. Other disciple-makers have left home and moved to another area or country to share more fully in the harvest. (Matthew 9:37, 38) All of this calls for a self-sacrificing spirit. But more is needed to be an effective disciple maker.

BePatientWithoutWastingTime

Patience is another quality that helps us to make disciples. Our Christian message calls for urgent action, but making disciples often takes considerable time and requires patience. (1 Corinthians 7:29) Jesus was not impatient with his half brother James. Although James apparently was well-acquainted with Jesus’ preaching activities, for a time something held him back from becoming a disciple. (John 7:5) In the short period between Christ’s death and Pentecost 33 C.E., however, James evidently became a disciple, for the Scriptures suggest that he met for prayer together with his mother, his brothers, and the apostles. (Acts 1:13, 14) James made fine spiritual progress, later shouldering weighty responsibilities in the Christian congregation.—Acts 15:13; 1 Corinthians 15:7.

Like farmers, Christians are cultivating things that often grow slowly—understanding of God’s Word, love for Jehovah, and a Christlike spirit. This calls for patience. James wrote: “Exercise patience . . . , brothers, until the presence of the Lord. Look! The farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until he gets the early rain and the late rain. You too exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close.” (James 5:7, 8) James was urging fellow believers to ‘exercise patience until the Lord’s presence.’ If the disciples did not understand something, Jesus patiently explained or illustrated matters. (Matthew 13:10-23; Luke 19:11; 21:7; Acts 1:6-8) Now that the Lord is present, there is a similar need for patience as we endeavor to make disciples. Those who become Jesus’ followers in our day require patient instruction.—John 14:9.

Even though we are patient, the word does not bear fruit in most people with whom we start to study the Bible. (Matthew 13:18-23) After making reasonable efforts to assist them, therefore, we wisely stop spending time with such individuals and seek to find those who are more likely to value Bible truth. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6) Of course, even appreciative people may need extended help to change their views, attitudes, and priorities in life. So we are patient, just as Jesus was patient with the disciples who had difficulty developing a proper attitude.—Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45.

Develop the Art of Teaching

Love for God, concern for people, a self-sacrificing spirit, and patience are important factors in successful disciple making. Teaching skills also need to be developed, for they enable us to explain matters in a clear, uncomplicated way. For example, many sayings of the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ, were especially powerful because of their simplicity. Likely you recall such statements of Jesus as these: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” “Do not give what is holy to dogs.” “Wisdom is proved righteous by its works.” “Pay back . . . Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.” (Matthew 6:20; 7:6; 11:19; 22:21) Of course, Jesus did not make only short statements. He taught with clarity and explained things when doing so was appropriate. How can you imitate Jesus’ style of teaching?

Careful preparation is the key to simplicity and clarity. An unprepared minister tends to talk too much. He may virtually drown the main points in an excessive flow of words, saying everything he knows on a subject. In contrast, the well-prepared minister thinks about the person he is instructing, meditates on the topic, and presents clearly just what is needed. (Proverbs 15:28; 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2) He considers how much the student already knows and what points should be emphasized during the study. The minister may know many interesting details about the subject, but clarity comes from pruning away unnecessary information.

Jesus also helped people to reason, instead of simply giving them facts. On one occasion, for example, he asked: “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive duties or head tax? From their sons or from the strangers?” (Matthew 17:25) We may enjoy explaining the Bible so much that we have to exercise self-control in order to let the student

express himself or explain a matter being considered during a home Bible study. Naturally, we should not overwhelm people with questions. Instead, with tact, good illustrations, and thoughtful questions, we can help them to appreciate the Scriptural points presented in our Bible-based publications.

The Scriptures speak of the “art of teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9) Such teaching ability involves much more than helping someone to memorize facts. We should try to assist a Bible student to understand the difference between truth and error, good and bad, wisdom and foolishness. As we do this and endeavor to cultivate love for Jehovah in the person’s heart, he may see why he should obey Him.

Have a Zealous Share in Disciple Making

The Christian congregation is a disciple-making organization. When a new one becomes a disciple, the Witness of Jehovah who found him and helped him to learn what the Bible teaches is not the only one with reason for rejoicing. When people organize a search party to locate a lost child, only one member of the group may actually find the youngster. But when the child is reunited with his parents, everyone involved in the search rejoices. (Luke 15:6, 7) Similarly, disciple-making is a team effort. All Christians share in searching for those who may become Jesus’ disciples. And when a new one starts to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall, every Christian present contributes to building his appreciation for true worship. (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25) Thus, all Christians can rejoice that hundreds of thousands of new disciples are made each year.

Many faithful Christians would be delighted to teach someone about Jehovah and true worship. Despite their best efforts, though, they may not have been able to do so. If that is your situation, continue to strengthen your love for Jehovah, be concerned about people, be self-sacrificing, exercise patience, and seek to enhance your teaching skills. Above all, make your desire to teach the truth a matter of prayer. (Ecclesiastes 11:1) Find comfort in the knowledge that everything you do in Jehovah’s service contributes to the disciple-making work that glorifies God.

2 Timothy 2:1-26. To make us the most effective disciple makers possible and show us the areas lacking in our disciple making ministry.

Many people train at Bible College and yet fail when they seek to have an effective people ministry later on. We are all convinced that:

- i) people without Christ go to hell, and
- ii) the Great Commission is important to us today.

Yet how can we have an effective, fruitful ministry for Christ? I wish to share some things that are big in my life as I seek to make disciples³⁰ of people for Jesus Christ. We need:

LOVE for God, the Bible and people.

"The greatest of these is charity (God’s agape love)". 1 Corinthians 13:13.

"The love of Christ constrains us". 2 Corinthians 5:14.

"Love one another with a pure heart fervently". 1 Peter 1:22.

"They shall prosper that love thee (Jerusalem)". Psalm 122:6.

"I will love thee O Lord, my strength". Psalm 18:1.

"I have loved the habitation of thy house". Psalm 26:8.

"A friend loveth at all times". Proverbs 17:17.

We need love for Christ, believers, the house of God, lost people and the Bible because our patience is going to be tried. We will be hurt, insulted, rejected and misunderstood.

ZEAL. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." John 2:17. Christ was zealous for the honour of God's name, that all people hold it highly. We should have an intense desire to build a church for God's glory. Are you obsessed with zeal to get people saved and built up, to make disciples to present to Jesus Christ as trophies of grace? Are you zealous against the cults who push lies about God and deceive people into hell? You get zeal as you stay close to God. Zeal can stop you backsliding into laziness.

PERSEVERANCE AND DETERMINATION

"And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Gal. 6:9 Here God promises us success if we persevere. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the

work of the Lord forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1

Corinthians 15:58 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:5,6 Never give up because you never know what great person you may win to Christ. Just think of what success God has given you so far as an encouragement.

STUDY AND KNOW THE BIBLE

If you delight in the law of the Lord and meditate in it day and night, whatever you do will prosper. (eg: discipling) Psalm 1:2,3. "Study to show thyself approved unto God." 2 Timothy 2:15. "Take..... the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Psalm 138:2. If you don't know the Bible then:

i) you can't disciple people.

ii) you can't refute Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Catholics, etc.

iii) you can't stay on fire, keen and motivated.

BE A SOUL-WINNER, DO DOOR KNOCKING

"He that winneth souls is wise". Proverbs 11:30. "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house." Luke 16:27. When you door knock you may tell people: "Excuse me, someone you know has

asked for me to come to your house to tell you something very important on how to go to heaven and avoid what he is going through." See Luke 16:27. "Daily in the Temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach & preach Jesus

Christ." Acts 5:42 "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever". Daniel 12:3. Soul winning results in:

- i) you staying keen.
- ii) the church growing.
- iii) people spending forever in heaven.

BE COURAGEOUS AND FEARLESS

"The fear of man bringeth a snare". Proverbs 29:25. "We ought to obey God rather than man". Acts 5:29.

"God hath not given us the spirit of fear". 2 Timothy 1:7. "The battle is the Lord's". 1 Samuel 17:47. "Come and let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few". 1 Samuel 14:6. (Jonathan's idea was, let's give it a go, you never know what good may happen). "We may boldly say: The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do unto me". Hebrews 13:6.

Discipline yourself to go doorknocking every week and don't fear what people will say to you. If they reject you, go find someone else.

49 General Commands of Christ

The cost of following Jesus in Modern Zambia

1. Repent—Matthew 4:17—Humility
2. Follow Me—Matthew 4:19—Meekness
3. Rejoice—Matthew 5:12—Joyfulness
4. Let Your Light Shine—Matthew 5:16—Generosity
5. Honor God's Law—Matthew 5:17-18—Love
6. Be Reconciled—Matthew 5:24-25—Responsibility
7. Do Not Commit Adultery—Matthew 5:29-30—Self-Control
8. Keep Your Word—Matthew 5:37—Truthfulness
9. Go the Second Mile—Matthew 5:38-42—Deference
10. Love Your Enemies—Matthew 5:44—Creativity
11. Be Perfect—Matthew 5:48—Sincerity
12. Practice Secret Disciplines—Matthew 6:1-18—Faith
13. Lay Up Treasures—Matthew 6:19-21—Thriftiness
14. Seek God's Kingdom—Matthew 6:33—Initiative
15. Judge Not—Matthew 7:1—Discernment
16. Do Not Cast Pearls—Matthew 7:6—Discretion
17. Ask, Seek, and Knock—Matthew 7:7-8—Resourcefulness
18. Do Unto Others—Matthew 7:12—Sensitivity
19. Choose the Narrow Way—Matthew 7:13-14—Decisiveness
20. Beware of False Prophets—Matthew 7:15—Alertness
21. Pray For Laborers—Matthew 9:38—Compassion
22. Be Wise as Serpents—Matthew 10:16—Wisdom
23. Fear God, Not Man—Matthew 10:26—Boldness

24. Hear God's Voice—Matthew 11:15—Attentiveness
25. Take My Yoke—Matthew 11:29—Obedience
26. Honor Your Parents—Matthew 15:4—Honor/Reverence
27. Beware of Leaven—Matthew 16:6—Virtue
28. Deny Yourself—Luke 9:23—Determination
29. Despise Not Little Ones—Matthew 18:10—Tolerance
30. Go to Offenders—Matthew 18:15—Justice
31. Beware of Covetousness—Luke 12:15—Contentment
32. Forgive Offenders—Matthew 18:21–22—Forgiveness
33. Honor Marriage—Matthew 19:6—Loyalty
34. Be a Servant—Matthew 20:26–28—Availability
35. Be a House of Prayer—Matthew 21:13—Persuasiveness
36. Ask in Faith—Matthew 21:21–22—Patience
37. Bring in the Poor—Luke 14:12–14—Hospitality
38. Render to Caesar—Matthew 22:19–21—Gratefulness
39. Love the Lord—Matthew 22:37–38—Enthusiasm
40. Love Your Neighbor—Matthew 22:39—Gentleness
41. Await My Return—Matthew 24:42–44—Punctuality
42. Take, Eat, and Drink—Matthew 26:26–27—Thoroughness
43. Be Born Again—John 3:7—Security
44. Keep My Commandments—John 14:15—Diligence
45. Watch and Pray—Matthew 26:41—Endurance
46. Feed My Sheep—John 21:15–16—Dependability
47. Baptize My Disciples—Matthew 28:19—Cautiousness
48. Receive God's Power—Luke 24:49—Orderliness
49. Make Disciples—Matthew 28:20—Flexibility

A disciple is someone who does certain things. This view of a disciple emphasizes discipline and obedience. You demonstrate that you are a follower of Christ by trying to live as He lived and by carrying out His commands. A disciple does “good things,” such as quiet times, evangelism, involvement with other believers, and social justice work. We feel deep concern for righteousness, whether personal or cultural. Moral choices and behavior matter deeply and are of more ultimate importance than emotional hardship. For example, I should remain moral even if friends reject me for not participating in their kind of behavior.

A disciple is someone who understands certain things. This view of a disciple emphasizes accurate thinking and insight concerning God, people, salvation, and so on. The theory is that if you think correctly about the important things, then the rest of your life will assume the proper perspective. A disciple must understand that God is both holy and loving; that people, though sinners are made in the image of God; that Christ's death was the substitute payment for our sin; and that because of Jesus' payment, we are granted access to the heart of God.

This view holds that we can acquire a substantial understanding of God's redemptive work, which enables us to correctly see Him and our position in Him. An extension of this view is

that we can also gain a substantial understanding of our own lives, our personal history and family background. This understanding enables us to make progress in our relationship with Christ. For instance, understanding that your father's past ridicule has hobbled your self-image helps you begin to confidently give yourself to others.

Practice helpfulness, openness and humility because Jesus and his followers were common men with any members of the society. They lived on the road often without roofs over their heads and spent much time in learning and preparing to take the good news to all.



A Spirituality of Mission in Zambia

I was impressed by the article of Gotthard Rosner about 'the mission of Jesus in Zambia' (Petit Echo, issue 2008/8). He states at the beginning that "like all disciples of Jesus Christ, we are sent to continue his mission." He then quotes two texts from the Gospel of John to describe the mission of Jesus and our mission:³⁴ "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn.10, 10) and "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you" (Jn. 20, 21-22).

Gotthard develops very well the mission of Christ and our mission today in the context of Zambia. I would like to complement some of his reflections by pointing out some basic or fundamental attitudes of the disciples of Christ who are sent on mission. Starting from the two quotations in the Gospel of John I will limit myself to try and answer two questions: first, what is the mission of Jesus all about? And second, what is our mission today all about?

I. The mission of Jesus

In order to try to understand Jesus' mission better let us have a closer look at the text of Jn. 10, 10: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full". I will comment on this text in 3 parts.

(a) "I have come"...

Jesus came down from heaven to become one of us. Like any immigrant he brought with him the culture, language and lifestyle of his home in heaven. Knowing the Father and knowing our human condition put him in a perfect position to be the bridge or the link between heaven and earth. He is therefore the bond of unity between God and humankind. He came to share with us the life from heaven and therefore 'pitched his tent among us'. The 'I have come' also shows us the immense Love of God offering each one of us 'the Word made flesh' in order to welcome it.

(b) ... "that they may have life"...

The kind of life Jesus wants to share with his disciples is wonderfully well portrayed in the seven 'signs' or miracles and in the various encounters in John's Gospel. It is a clear reflection of the new life he wants to offer. The people he encounters see and hear Jesus act and speak in terms they think they understand, yet Jesus refers at the same time to a different reality altogether. Just let us take the example of 'the man born blind' which combines a 'sign' or miracle with some encounters. The main point of the story is to show us how to become a true disciple. The man born blind represents each one of us struggling to come to terms with our faith in the Lord. Jesus' words 'I am the light of the world' is a reminder that there is more than physical blindness at stake here. The basic story is quite straightforward. Jesus approaches the blind man, 'anoints' his eyes with clay, tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam and there and then he regains his sight. The only problem is that all this takes place on the Sabbath and some of the Pharisees are not impressed. The man is being interrogated, even his parents are called upon to give witness and in the end the man is thrown out of the temple but he ends up professing his faith in Jesus. Now this man is quite a character, only gradually and not without a struggle does he come to the Light! In the story this man, who step by step regained his sight both physically and spiritually, is portrayed in sharp contrast with the religious leaders who could see physically but gradually become blind spiritually. The new life refers to both physical and spiritual healing and to a personal intimacy with the Lord.

(c) ... "and have it to the full"

A key text in the Gospel of John is the washing by Jesus of his disciples' feet (Jn.13, 1-15). This scene refers to Jesus' glorification, meaning his suffering, death and resurrection. It is meant as an example of humility and service and points to his self-giving on the cross. The motivation is pure love and reminds us of Jesus' commandment: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should also love one another" (Jn.13, 34). Just before his suffering and death Jesus shares with his disciples his dearest wish, his testament: "May they all be one, as you Father are in me and I in you, that they may also be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (Jn.17, 21). In this way we see how on the one hand the readiness to serve and suffer as portrayed by the washing of the feet and on the other the new commandment and the prayer of Jesus for unity constitute two important elements or basic attitudes in the life of the disciple. The final sign that will give the disciple the fullness of life is the gift of the Holy Spirit who will empower the disciple to be sent on mission. In John's Gospel Jesus hands over his Spirit on the cross to the community of disciples represented by his mother Mary and the beloved disciple. Dying Jesus communicates his life giving Spirit to his disciples in order to allow them to share in his own Life, life in abundance!

By way of concluding the first part of this reflection I would like to deduct from the text of Jn.10,10 five basic qualities or characteristics of the disciple that seem to me essential in view of being sent on mission. Before being sent on mission we are invited to become first of all disciples. These five attitudes of discipleship are not exclusive of course and run as follows:

- (1) **Inhabited by the Word:** the disciple is invited to welcome, listen to, meditate upon and be transformed by the Word who is Life. In this way the disciple experiences God's loving presence and becomes a witness of the Good News.
- (2) **Marked by faith:** the disciple is invited to keep his faith in Jesus alive. Faith in Jesus will grow stronger by passing through various struggles and trials and the Lord Himself will become the centre of the life of the disciple.
- (3) **Challenged by mutual love:** the disciple is invited to show fraternal love and concern to his fellow disciples first and also to the people around. In this way the community will contribute actively to the realisation of the testament of Jesus.
- (4) **Ready to face the cross:** the disciple is invited to render service and freely take up the cross. In this way the disciple shares in the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection so as to bear fruit in plenty.
- (5) **Filled with the Spirit:** the disciple is invited to be open to and be filled with the Spirit. In this way the disciple will be strengthened and inspired in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.

After having reflected on the mission of Jesus and having singled out five basic attitudes of discipleship, let us now concentrate on our mission today.

II. Our mission today

As missionaries or apostles we are sent by Christ to continue his mission. In Jn.20, 21 we read: "...as the Father has sent me, so I send you."

The Father sent his son to inaugurate the Kingdom of God and Jesus brings his Father's plan to fulfilment, as stated in Lk.4, 18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

Jesus entrusted the continuation of his mission to the Church, as John-Paul II writes in his encyclical 'Redemptoris Missio' nr.20: "the Church is effectively and concretely at the service of the Kingdom." And under nr.15 we read: "...Building the Kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the Kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness."

We must recognize that since Vatican II a careful reading of the signs of the times has brought about a great variety or diversity in missionary activities. Mission became a very dynamic concept which caught the imagination of missionaries all over the world and has led to a shift in focus or attention nearly every 10 years. This illustrates the great dynamism of mission and the vitality of the missionaries themselves.

(1) In **the sixties** the focus was on **development**. Mission meant getting involved in all kinds of projects, from digging water wells to training oxen for ploughing or from running credit unions to installing solar energy, etc...

(2) In **the seventies** the stress was on **liberation**. Mission meant getting involved in Justice and Peace issues, from taking part in anti-nuclear protest marches to organizing peaceful sit-in demonstrations in churches or from boycotting certain products from South Africa to writing letters for Amnesty International, etc...

(3) In **the eighties** there was a shift to **inculturation**. Mission meant doing something with the local culture and the Gospel, from introducing liturgical dances to displaying local artistic religious paintings or from mixing some traditional cultural elements in the sacraments to some serious research in African theology, etc...

(4) In **the nineties** the accent was put on the **media**. Mission meant making proper use of the mass media, from producing Radio and TV programmes to publishing all kinds of magazines or from making video productions to setting up web-sites, etc...

(5) Since **the beginning of the new millennium** the latest expression of mission is definitely **dialogue or encounter**. Mission today means getting involved in a variety of encounters, from ecumenical initiatives to prayer meetings with other religions or from meetings with

representatives of African Traditional Religions to taking part in Catholic-Islamic encounters, etc...

I suppose only God knows what the next decennia will bring as far as the dynamics of mission are concerned. Are we going to move from 'cyber' mission to 'virtual' mission or to mission in outer space?

Whatever the case, all these expressions of mission were and are really a sign of the dynamism of mission and all this was and is being done in view of making disciples of all nations and spreading the Kingdom. All these expressions of mission are still valid today and have surely brought an enormous amount of blessings to the people concerned and have contributed a lot to ushering in the Kingdom of God due to the tremendous efforts made by missionaries all over the world.

However, in the final analysis I believe that for a fruitful and effective apostolate it doesn't matter so much **what** we are doing, be it parish work, youth apostolate, preaching retreats, formation, working for Justice and Peace, administration, dialogue, etc...or even **where** we are working or living, be it in Europe, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East or Asia.

What really matters is **how** we carry out our mission and that brings us back to the basic attitudes of the disciple sent on mission and the need to deepen these attitudes and not to take them for granted.

Having said that, I am also convinced that there is an urgent need to do a careful reading of the 'signs of the times'. For us missionaries of Africa this needs to be done in the light of rapid changes both in the Church and society in Africa and in our own Society as well.

Maybe the next General Chapter could be the occasion to revisit some of the basic attitudes of the disciple sent on mission and make a careful reading of the 'signs of the times' and come up with some clear and sound priorities for the next decade or so.

In conclusion I would say that what really unites us is a common spirituality of mission which is lived out and finds its expression in a great variety or diversity of ministries and apostolic activities according to each one's talents and capabilities.

Question: "Why is making disciples important?"

Answer: The making of disciples is our Lord's means for answering the prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus chose to use dedicated followers, His disciples, to carry the message of salvation to all peoples of the world. He included this as a command in His last words before His ascension to heaven: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Making disciples is important because it is the Lord's chosen method of spreading the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. During His public ministry, Jesus spent more than three years making disciples—teaching and training His chosen twelve. He gave them many convincing proofs that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah; they believed on Him, though imperfectly. He spoke to the crowds, but often He drew the disciples aside privately to teach them the meaning of His parables and miracles. He sent them out on ministry assignments. He also taught them that soon He would be returning to His Father following His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21; John 12:23-36, 14:2-4). Though they could not comprehend it, He made the disciples this astonishing promise: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). Jesus also promised to send His Spirit to be with them forever (John 14:16-17).

As promised, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came with power on the believers, who then were emboldened to speak the Good News to everyone. The remainder of the Book of Acts gives the exciting account of all that was accomplished through them. In one city the opposition said, “These who have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6 KJV). Multitudes placed their faith in Jesus Christ, and they also became disciples. When strong persecution came from the false religious leaders, they dispersed to other areas and continued to obey Christ's command. Churches were established throughout the Roman Empire, and eventually in other nations.

Later, because of disciples such as Martin Luther and others, Europe was opened to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the Reformation. Eventually, Christians emigrated to the New World to make Christ known. Though the world still is not completely evangelized, the challenge is as viable now as ever before. The command of our Lord remains – “Go and make disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” The characteristics of a disciple may be simply stated as

- one who is assured of his salvation (John 3:16) and is activated by the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:26-27);
- one who is growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18); and
- one who shares Christ's burden for the lost souls of men and women. Jesus 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” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Answer: By definition, a disciple is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This

requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and to disciple others to walk in His way. According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth characterized by the following:

1. Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38). The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.

2. Following Jesus' teachings (John 8:31-32). We must be obedient children and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death (Philippians 3:6-8).

3. Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8). Our job is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be new conduct (thoughts, words and actions) representative of that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

4. Love for other disciples (John 13:34-35). We are told that love of other believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. These verses show us that love is not an emotion; it is action. We must be doing something and involved in the process. Furthermore, we are told to think more highly of others than of ourselves and to look out for their interests (Philippians 2:3-4). The next verse in Philippians (verse 5) really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything in life: "our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." What a perfect example He is to us for everything we are to do in our Christian walk.

5. Evangelism - Making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers about the wonderful changes Jesus Christ has made in our lives. No matter what our maturity level in the Christian life, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we don't really know enough or haven't been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God. They may not know a lot of Bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God, and that is exactly what we are to share.

Revision

CanYouExplain?

- Why does disciple-making test our love for God?
 - What qualities are needed by disciple makers?
 - What is involved in the “art of teaching”?
1. What skills and attitudes were needed by some of God’s servants in the past?
 2. We will discuss what questions related to the disciple-making work?
 3. The command to make disciples gives us what opportunity?
 4. Why did Jesus enjoy teaching people about Jehovah?
 - 5, 6. What is the key quality needed by disciple makers?
 - 7, 8. How did Jesus view people?
 9. What attitude did Paul have as a disciple maker?
 - 10, 11. Why is a self-sacrificing spirit needed when we are trying to make disciples?

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UNIT II

JESUSPOWER OVER DISEASE AND NATURE

Objectives

- i. give examples of events in Zambia which some people regard as miracle,
- ii. list and illustrate reasons why Jesus performed miracles,
- iii. relate the stories from Luke's Gospel of Jesus healing sick people (Simon's Mother-in-Law; The Paralytic; The man with the Withered Hand; The Centurion's Servant; The Man with Dropsy;

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

A miracle is a happening, which cannot be fully explained by natural events or human reasoning. Such events are called 'supernatural.' A miracle in the Bible is something in which man sees God at work.

A miracle is an event not explicable by natural or scientific laws. Such an event may be attributed to a supernatural being (God or gods), a miracle worker, a saint or a religious leader. Theologians say that, with divine providence, God(s) regularly work through created nature yet are free to work without, above, or against it as well.

The word "miracle" is often used to characterise any beneficial event that is statistically unlikely but not contrary to the laws of nature, such as surviving a natural disaster, or simply a "wonderful" occurrence, regardless of likelihood, such as a birth. Other miracles might be: survival of an illness diagnosed as terminal, escaping a life-threatening situation or 'beating the odds'. Some coincidences may be seen as miracles.

The gospels record three sorts of miracles performed by Jesus: exorcisms, cures, and nature wonders. In St John's Gospel the miracles are referred to as "signs" and the emphasis is on God demonstrating his underlying normal activity in remarkable ways. In the New Testament, the greatest miracle is the resurrection of Jesus, the event central to Christian faith.

Jesus explains in the New Testament that miracles are performed by faith in God. "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move." (Gospel of Matthew 17:20). After Jesus returned to heaven, the book of Acts records the disciples of Jesus praying to God to grant that miracles be done in his name, for the purpose of convincing onlookers that he is alive. (Acts 4:29–31).

Other passages mention false prophets who will be able to perform miracles to deceive "if possible, even the elect of Christ" (Matthew 24:24). 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of

unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved." Revelation 13:13,14 says, "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." Revelation 16:14 says, "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Revelation 19:20 says, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." These passages indicate that signs, wonders, and miracles are not necessarily committed by God.

In early Christianity miracles were the most often attested motivations for conversions of pagans; pagan Romans took the existence of miracles for granted; Christian texts reporting them offered miracles as divine proof of the Christian God's unique claim to authority, relegating all other gods to the lower status of daimones: "of all worships, the Christian best and most particularly advertised its miracles by driving out of spirits and laying on of hands". The Gospel of John is structured around miraculous "signs": The success of the Apostles according to the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea lay in their miracles: "though laymen in their language", he asserted, "they drew courage from divine, miraculous powers". The conversion of Constantine by a miraculous sign in heaven is a prominent fourth-century example.

Since the Age of Enlightenment, miracles have often needed to be rationalized: C.S. Lewis, Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig, and other 20th-century Christians have argued that miracles are reasonable and plausible. For example, Lewis said that a miracle is something that comes totally out of the blue. If for thousands of years a woman can become pregnant only by sexual intercourse with a man, then if she were to become pregnant without a man, it would be a miracle.

There have been numerous claims of miracles by people of most Christian denominations, including but not limited to faith healings and casting out demons. Miracle reports are especially prevalent in Roman Catholicism and Pentecostal or Charismatic churches.

Events regarded as miracles

Sometimes events occur which some people regard as miracles. This is because no human reasoning can explain why they happened that way. For example, surviving a fatal or serious car accident where it seemed impossible for anyone to survive.

There are also occasions when very sick people do make a recovery through prayer, even

though they have been declared terminally ill.

Why Jesus performed miracles

There are many reasons why Jesus performed miracles. The following are some of them:

- To show that the Kingdom of God had arrived.
- Inviting people to put their faith in Him.
- Out of His sympathy and compassion for people.
- To show His Messiahship,
- To fulfil prophecy.

To get at the reason why Jesus performed His miracles, we need to unearth the expectations of those who lived at that time. From our perspective, we know who Jesus claimed to be—the Messiah and God in sandals. But the people of ancient Israel had no New Testament to study. They had the Old Testament, the teachings of the respected rabbis, and hope.

Jesus strode into the midst of their hope—hope to be free of oppression from distant Rome—with a bold claim. The prophecies were fulfilled in Him. The Messiah had come to draw people to the Kingdom of God. While He had no sword that they could see, they could see Him healing their friends and relatives. They could see the power of God moving through the hills. They'd read about the great miracles of Moses and Joshua, Daniel and Elijah, but seeing them was another matter.

The miracles themselves were not ways for Jesus to show off His power, especially since He had given up His former glory to come to earth and do the will of the Father in heaven. Instead, the miracles vindicated His claims about Himself and His teaching. Although He didn't need to perform any miracles and refused to perform them on demand, they came so that others might believe (John 10:37-38).

With all the healings and weather control, however, it's easy to forget the greatest miracle Jesus performed. Being dead and in the grave, Jesus took His life back and delivered a confirmation of His

When Jesus lived on this earth, he made some astounding claims. As a twelve-year-old, Jesus reminded his parents that God was his Father. In his sermons he said things like, "I am the light of the world... I am the way, the truth and the life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven..." (John 8:12, 14:6, 6:51). Near the end of his life, Jesus answered the question "Are you the Son of God," saying, "Yes, it is as you say" (Matthew 26:64).

Jesus claimed to be divine. One would think that the divine would be able to do things on earth that mere humans could not. If Jesus really were divine, he should have been able to perform miracles.

Jesus did just that. He healed the sick, walked on water and even raised the dead. These miracles helped to support his claim that he was the true God come to earth to save mankind.

Jesus said, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (John 14:11).

Jesus' miracles did more than just support his divine claims. Jesus' miracles provided him an audience to hear his message. Some came to see Jesus drawn by the prospect of seeing or receiving a miracle. When they came, Jesus also took the opportunity to tell them about the good news of forgiveness.

However, Jesus' miracles were no mere marketing tool. Jesus genuinely cared about people and used his divine power to bring healing and happiness. The Bible tells us, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

Finally, Jesus' miracles helped to build up the faith of those who believed in him. For example, one night Jesus slept in a boat while a deadly storm raged on the sea. Deathly afraid, Jesus' friends woke him up and pleaded with him to do something. In a miracle of divine proportions, Jesus raised his hands, rebuked the wind and the water, and the storm immediately calmed (Luke 8:22-25). Jesus' miracle of power over the storm helped bolster the weak faith of his friends.

Why did Jesus perform miracles? Jesus' miracles were not random acts, but they carried a specific message to the nation of Israel, the Jews. In the New Testament the word "miracle" and the word "sign" both come from the same Greek word: "semeion" (say-mi-on). The meaning of the word is an explanation of something hidden and secret. It denotes a sign, mark, an indication, token, or wonder and can be a warning, admonition, or instruction of truth.

The key to Jesus' miracles is the meaning of this word. Why? "Jews demand miraculous signs. . ." (1 Corinthians 1:22). "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). This sign to the nation of Israel of the coming of the Messiah was to be the birth of a Son born of a virgin. "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

In Isaiah chapter 42 in the first of the "Servant Songs," which are a prophesy of the Messiah, we find this verse, "To open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:7). Here we have the Messiah the Servant who comes to help those who cannot help themselves and this verse is fully fulfilled in Jesus' miracles.

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There are 37 of Jesus' miracles recorded in the gospels. There are 21 of Jesus' miracles recorded in Matthew, three of which only appear in Matthew. There are 19 of Jesus' miracles recorded in Mark, two of which only appear in Mark. There are 22 of Jesus' miracles recorded in Luke, seven of which only appear in Luke. And there are 8 of Jesus' miracles

recorded in John, six of which only appear in John. To go through all 37 of these miracles and expound on them would require a very large thesis. Therefore, we will look only at a few that demonstrate the principle of the Servant Messiah giving Israel the message that Jesus was indeed their Messiah.

The first is found only in John 9:1-34. It is the story of the man born blind. And it is a clear fulfillment of Isaiah 42:7. This man born blind had never seen the light until the "light of the world" (John 9:5) opened His eyes.

Second, we find the stilling of the storm in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25. Here Jesus displays His power over His creation (Ephesians 3:9).

Third, Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the grave is recorded only in John 11:1-44. Here Jesus displays His power over death. The fact that Jesus called Lazarus by name is significant. If Jesus had proclaimed, "Come forth" without that specification, His power would have opened all of the graves.

The healing of those with leprosy is a special sign and it proclaims the proof of Christ's power to banish the consequences of sin. Leprosy itself is a picture of sin. We find one such healing in Matthew 8:4 (also see: Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 5:12-14). This specific healing is very interesting. "Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'" (Matthew 8:4). The Law had very strict requirements for the verification of the healing of a leper and the leprous house. Those instructions can be found in Leviticus chapter 13 to 14:57. This passage gives instructions to the priests on how to diagnose leprosy and what to do if someone who had leprosy presented themselves as healed. It is a fact that after the law was given no Jew had ever been healed of leprosy. Only Naaman, the Syrian, a Gentile was healed by washing seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:8-14). This fact gave rise to the belief that only the Messiah would be able to heal leprosy and this is indeed what we see in the gospels. In addition to the account of Jesus' healing of one leper at the beginning of His ministry there is the record of His healing of 10 lepers in Luke 17:11-19, which is very near the end of His time on earth.

Therefore, Jesus' miracles were a sign to the nation of Israel that He was their promised and long awaited Messiah. However, in spite of all of the miracles and signs that Jesus gave to the nation of Israel and the religious rulers, they rejected their Messiah. They continued to reject the message given to them by Jesus' disciples and the result occurred in A.D. 70 when the nation was once again taken out of the land and the temple was destroyed just as Jesus had prophesied (Matthew 24:2).

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1. JESUS HEALS SICK PEOPLE

There are many miracles that Jesus performed by healing sick people. For example:

- **The paralysed man** - Luke 5:17-26

One day Jesus was preaching and the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were there. The power of the Lord was with Him to heal the sick.

Some people came carrying a paralysed man on a mat. There was a big crowd and they could not reach Jesus. So they decided to go up on the roof and lower the man through the roof; right into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw the faith of these people, He said to the man, "Man your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and teachers of the Law wondered who this was who could forgive sins. Jesus knew what they were thinking and he asked them, "Why are you thinking like that?"

A Paralyzed Man in Capernaum

In the city of Capernaum there lived a paralyzed man who could not walk.



A Paralyzed Man in Capernaum

In the city of Capernaum there lived a paralyzed man who could not walk.

MARK 2:1-12 1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralysed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



Friends of the Paralyzed Man The paralyzed man's friends wanted to take him to see Jesus.

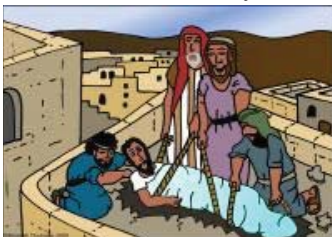


The Men Carry the Paralyzed Man

The men took up the paralyzed man on his mat to take him to the house where Jesus was preaching.



The men go on the roof so many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and Jesus preached the word to them. Since the men couldn't get to Jesus because of the crowd in the house they took the paralyzed man up on the roof.



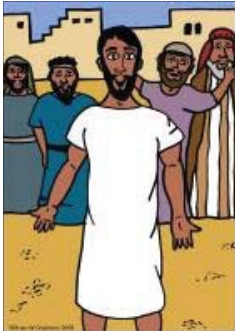
The men make a hole in the roof. They made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.



Jesus Heals The Paralyzed Man When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you



The Pharisees are Angry With Jesus And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemeth!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--



The Paralyzed Man is Healed then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men."

- **The man with a withered hand** - Luke 6:6-11

On another Sabbath, Jesus went into a synagogue to preach. A man was there, whose right hand was withered. Teachers of the Law and Pharisees were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched Him closely.

Jesus knew their thoughts, and asked the man to stand in front of everyone. Jesus asked the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees whether it was right to do good or evil on the Sabbath? None of them answered. Then Jesus asked the man to stretch out his hand, and he was completely healed.

According to the literal or natural idea, by a withered hand is to be understood the member of the body so called, deprived of its life and consequent use, for want of a free circulation of vital powers; but according to the spiritual idea, by a withered hand is to be understood a faculty or power of the human mind, deprived also of its life and energy for want of a free circulation of vital principles. For the hand of the body, as being created to execute the purposes of the soul, is a figure of power, or strength; and since all spiritual power and strength is of two kinds, namely. intellectual and voluntary; the one originating in the understanding, and the other in the will, or the one originating in truth, and the other in good; therefore every man has two hands, in like manner as he has two eyes, and two ears, the one being intended to express the power of truth in the intellect, whilst the other is intended to express the power derived from good in the will. By the withered hand therefore, recorded in the above history, is spiritually figured the state of the Jewish church at that period, in that it was deprived of one of the above spiritual powers, so that its members were principled either in truth without good, or in good without truth; thus either in understanding without will, or in will without understanding; and this by reason of the want of circulation of the divine principles of heavenly love and wisdom in their minds and lives. Accordingly, in the original tongue, the term rendered withered is expressive of the idea of dryness, and therefore the withered hand might properly have been rendered a dry hand, to denote that the power of truth or of good was dried up, through a defect of the circulation of heavenly life in the interiors of the mind. It is remarkable also that JESUS CHRIST in speaking of the hand which offended, and was to be cut off and cast away, (Matt. 5:30), confines his observation to the right hand, because the right hand, like the right eye, has respect to the will of man, as the left has respect to the understanding; and therefore JESUS CHRIST, by his injunction to cut off and cast away the offending right hand, meant to inculcate this edifying lesson, that man ought to pay more attention to the evil desires in his will, than to the erroneous persuasions in his understanding, because all real offence comes from the former, and not at all from the latter, only so far as they are connected with and derived from the former.



In Mark 2:23, Jesus states, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”

The confrontation takes place in a synagogue

This confrontation with the Pharisees takes place in a synagogue in Galilee. As Luke 6:6 states, “On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.” The scribes and the Pharisees were “watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath.” In Matthew’s account, they confront Jesus with the question: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

Jesus knew that these Pharisees and scribes firmly understood the principle that saving the life of either an animal or a human takes precedence over the Sabbath law requiring that people cease from work. This is why he responds to them: “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So, then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Luke records Jesus thusly: “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” Note the contrast with Jesus’ use of infinitives: (1) to do good; (2) to do harm; (3) to save life; (4) to destroy it. This is a contrast between Jesus’ motives and the motives of the Pharisees.

Love is the compelling force for doing good

Romans 12:9 gives us the motivation for doing good: “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is

evil; hold fast to what is good.” Genuine love enables us to “hold fast to what is good” and to “abhor evil.” Also, Peter tells us how to silence those who oppose us in 1 Peter 2:15: “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”

Mark tells us that when the Pharisees heard Jesus use their own reasoning concerning the sheep, they were silent. They were caught on their own fishhook. Luke tells us that Jesus knew their thoughts. Mark then states Jesus’ response: “And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.” Jesus did not actually touch the man. He healed him simply by His spoken word. Jesus is teaching the Pharisees and us a profound lesson: Our approach to Sabbath is to do that which promotes physical and spiritual good and to oppose any attitude within us which will do harm.

The scribes and Pharisees were enraged by what Jesus did. Instead of taking delight in the restoration of the man’s withered hand and his physical wholeness, they plotted—on the Sabbath—to do evil by destroying Jesus’ life!

This incident illustrates that the “Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5). The healing of the man’s hand demonstrates that Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost and to restore the lost to a state of health that transcends the mere physical.

The significance of Jesus’ Sabbath healing

The Ten Commandments are given in two places, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. In the Exodus passage, the rationale for the Sabbath is that God rested on the seventh day after creating the cosmos in the first six days. The Deuteronomy 5:12-15 passage is part of Moses’s last (an extended) sermon to the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land:

¹² “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

The rationale for the Sabbath is this passage is God’s great redemptive work on their behalf. God brought them out of slavery into freedom.⁵³ Redemption involves restoration and wholeness. Jesus’ healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath transformed a physical affliction into physical healing and thus exemplified a spirit of redemption. This man who’d

suffered the slavery of this affliction now experienced the same joy that the Israelites experienced when they were freed from the affliction of their slavery.

But this miracle has a deeper significance. It is a living parable of the fact that through the great redemptive work of Christ on the cross we have been set free from the affliction of sin and death and transferred into the freedom that is ours in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:13).

This passage also illustrates the power of sovereign grace to deal with human inability, and since we are all individuals who have human inability by virtue of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, it illustrates again how we may be delivered and saved.

The healing is one of the seven miracles that Jesus Christ performed on the Sabbath. Today, of course, we look at this and we are not nearly so much concerned as much as a Jewish man in the day of our Lord might have been concerned, for we do not think about the Sabbath day in which they regarded the Sabbath day. They regarded the breach of the Sabbath law as a very serious thing. And then in addition to the law of Moses, they had added to that Sabbath law a number of traditions of their own, and these were regarded as being on the same level as Moses and the Old Testament.

And the feelings that they had about it might be illustrated in an incident that occurred in the time of Judas Maccabeus before the time of Christ. There were certain Jews who had sought refuge in caves in the wilderness, and Antiochus Epiphanes sent forth men to attack them. And when the attack was made, it was made on the Sabbath day. And because of the holiness with which the Jews regarded the Sabbath day, they made no resistance at all to the attack and died without any defiance of the men under Antiochus.

And then later, the Roman general Pompey was able to take Jerusalem because the Jews insisted on keeping the day of the Sabbath, and would not, even in the midst of attack, fail to keep the Sabbath law. I'm sure that you can see from this that they regarded the Sabbath as a very precious thing.

And when the Lord Jesus performs these acts of healing on the Sabbath day, it was surely an issue that was designed to stir up any kind of opposition that might have existed in the hearts of the leaders. Now, the Lord's answer to their objections is so obviously a victory for him and a defeat for them, that it's not surprising that A.T. Robertson, one of the finest New Testament scholars of another generation said, "The poor, pettifogging Pharisees are left in the pit."

Our Lord pierces through to the heart of the ⁵⁴issue and makes it clear that the Scriptures of the Old Testament never did forbid what he was doing, and that it was really the traditions of the Pharisees and Scribes which forbade that. He had gone from his ministry just preceding this

into the synagogue to teach, Luke tells us in his gospel. And as he went into the synagogue to teach, there was there present a man with a withered hand, with a paralyzed hand.

Whether he was set before the Lord Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees in order to provoke their opposition to them, and to make him do something by which they might accuse him, these three accounts do not specifically tell us. But it does seem as if it was an occasion specially designed to catch him in which they could legitimately, they thought, ensnare him.

You learn from this that just as today there are people who attend religious meetings but not necessarily to hear the word of God – it may be possible there is someone here this morning who is not here to hear the word of God—there are people who attend religious meetings but attend them out of curiosity. And then there are those who attend religious meetings out of a desire to criticize. And then there are those who attend religious meetings out of a deep concern to hear God speak to them through the word of God.

Now you would think that reading these incidents, there would be no need to prove such from this incident, because the Pharisees, evidently, were present here not so much to hear the word of God as to find something wrong with Jesus of Nazareth, that they might criticize him, and furthermore, by this time, that they might put him to death.

In Acts chapter 10 verse 33, there is a text which we have used on our bulletin. It is at the top of the order of service, and it is the word that is spoken with reference to Peter's coming to give the message to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. And you'll remember that it reads something like this. I think I have it before me: "Now, therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." I don't know of any better text in all of the word of God to express the attitude that we are to have when we come into a meeting such as this. Now are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded Thee of God.

Now that is very good as an expression of the attitude of those of you who are in the pew on Sunday morning or at any other time where the ministry of the word of God takes place. And I might also say that that is a very challenging thing for a teacher of the word of God, too, because it says, now are we all here present before God—and it lays a great deal of stress upon the fact that the man who stands up to minister the word of God, wherever he may minister the word of God, he stands up to minister the word of God under God, and he should recognize the responsibility to teach the word of God and not the word of man. I am sure that the attitude that is reflected there in that meeting would produce an improvement not only the congregation, but also in the pulpit itself.

Well, they were there, and they were there for criticism. And undoubtedly there were some who were there out of deep concern and anxious⁵⁵ to hear Jesus of Nazareth or any other teacher of the word of God who truly taught it.

Well, Matthew says after they went into the synagogue, and look – for that is the essential meaning of the word, behold – and look, there was a man who had his hand withered. The Scripture points this out as a notable fact. It's almost as if the Holy Spirit is drawing attention to the fact that there is a man in the meeting who has a paralyzed hand. What a different way of looking at things. We would be inclined to pass over something like that. After all, it was something of a deformity as a result of paralysis. And we often feel very embarrassed in the presence of someone who has some form of physical deformity.

But Scripture points this out with special attention. We do not read, “Look, there are the Pharisees.” We say these things in our meetings, too, you know. We say, look, there's the Mayor sitting over there. Well, look, there's one of the Dallas Cowboys! Or, look, there is Professor Infallible Science over there, and Dr. Almighty Philosophy talking with Dr. Pompous B.—I said for Bombastic—Preacher. [Laughter] But with God, it is not the mighty who are a concern for him, but it is the poor and the needy—or the needy, let's put it that way—those who have a need, these are the ones with whom the Spirit of God was concerned. And the text says, look! There was a man with a withered hand, and it's evident from the context of this – though he never speaks a word – that he was a man who not only had a physical need but above all, he had a spiritual need.

Now Luke says that it was his right hand. That is, it was his most important hand we assume. Years ago, I asked my wife, in connection with this, what do think this means? What's the meaning of the withered hand and the withered right hand, because all of these things, I think, have spiritual significance?

- **The man with dropsy** - Luke 14:1-6

On another Sabbath, Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee who watched Him carefully. In front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the Law whether it was right or not, to heal on the Sabbath. They all remained silent. Jesus took hold of the man's hand, healed him, and sent him on his way. Jesus asked them what they would do if one of them had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the Sabbath day. They had nothing to say.



The man who Jesus healed might have been suffering from Dropsy, which is also known as Edema. It is an abnormal condition in which fluid accumulates under a person's skin, in some areas of their body, such as in the legs. The condition, which can be very dangerous, requires medical attention from a doctor.

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- **The blind man at Jericho** - Luke 18:35-43



The Healing of the Blind Bartimaeus by Harold Copping

Mark 10:46-52 tells only of a man named Bartimaeus (literally "Son of Timaeus") being present, as Jesus left Jericho, making him one of the few named people to be miraculously cured by Jesus. Matthew 20:29-34 is a similar account of two blind men being healed outside of Jericho, but gives no names. Luke 18:35-43 tells of one unnamed blind man, but seems to place the event instead as when Jesus approached Jericho. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges asserts a reconciliation of the gospel accounts by observing two Jerichos—Old Jericho and New Jericho—meaning that whether Jesus encountered the blind on the way in to Jericho or the way out of Jericho depends on which Jericho was in the individual writer's perspective as Jesus went between the Jerichos.⁵⁸¹

These men together would be the second of two healings of blind men on Jesus' journey from the start of his travels from Bethsaida (in Mark 8:22-26) to Jerusalem, via Jericho.^[2] It is

possible, though not certain, that Bartimaeus heard about the first healing, and so knew of Jesus' reputation

171:5.1 Late on the afternoon of Thursday, March 30, Jesus and his apostles, at the head of a band of about two hundred followers, approached the walls of Jericho. As they came near the gate of the city, they encountered a throng of beggars, among them one Bartimeus, an elderly man who had been blind from his youth. This blind beggar had heard much about Jesus and knew all about his healing of the blind Josiah at Jerusalem. He had not known of Jesus' last visit to Jericho until he had gone on to Bethany. Bartimeus had resolved that he would never again allow Jesus to visit Jericho without appealing to him for the restoration of his sight.

171:5.2 News of Jesus' approach had been heralded throughout Jericho, and hundreds of the inhabitants flocked forth to meet him. When this great crowd came back escorting the Master into the city, Bartimeus, hearing the heavy tramping of the multitude, knew that something unusual was happening, and so he asked those standing near him what was going on. And one of the beggars replied, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." When Bartimeus heard that Jesus was near, he lifted up his voice and began to cry aloud, "Jesus, Jesus, have mercy upon me!" And as he continued to cry louder and louder, some of those near to Jesus went over and rebuked him, requesting him to hold his peace; but it was of no avail; he cried only the more and the louder.

171:5.3 When Jesus heard the blind man crying out, he stood still. And when he saw him, he said to his friends, "Bring the man to me." And then they went over to Bartimeus, saying: "Be of good cheer; come with us, for the Master calls for you." When Bartimeus heard these words, he threw aside his cloak, springing forward toward the center of the road, while those near by guided him to Jesus. Addressing Bartimeus, Jesus said: "What do you want me to do for you?" Then answered the blind man, "I would have my sight restored." And when Jesus heard this request and saw his faith, he said: "You shall receive your sight; go your way; your faith has made you whole." Immediately he received his sight, and he remained near Jesus, glorifying God, until the Master started on the next day for Jerusalem, and then he went before the multitude declaring to all how his sight had been restored in Jericho.

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man sat by the roadside begging. When the blind man heard the crowd pass by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "It is Jesus of Nazareth passing by." The man called out to Jesus to have mercy on him. Those who heard the man, rebuked him and told him to keep quiet. The man shouted all the more.

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?". The man replied, "I want to be able to see." Jesus restored the man's sight, and he, together with the crowd, started praising God.

In the above four stories, we learn that:

- The Sabbath was made for the good of man and not man for the Sabbath.
- Jesus had authority over the Sabbath.
- It is better to save life on the Sabbath than to keep to rules and rituals.

- Jesus had compassion and put the needs of the sick first.
 - Leprosy is a disease that is caused by bacteria. Mostly people that live in poor areas, have dirty water, food with little vitamins and aren't healthy to begin with can get it.
 - It looks very bad, even gross. It can make a face look bumpy and can completely change the way a person looks. Some people get it on their hands or feet and lose their fingers and toes from it.
 -
 - Leprosy in Biblical times was a terrible thing. We're not exactly sure what Biblical leprosy was. While it may have described what is known today as "Hansen's Disease," the word probably included other skin diseases, as well.[1] Whatever it was, once a person caught it, it was considered incurable, and those diagnosed with leprosy were banned from society.
 - "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp" (Leviticus 13:45-46).
 - While early Israelites didn't operate on the Germ Theory of disease, they understood something about infectious diseases, and those suspected of leprosy were kept isolated until their diagnosis was confirmed (Leviticus 13:5). But the loathing directed at lepers was not merely fear of a disease. Leprosy made a person ritually unclean. To touch a leper defiled a Jew almost as much as touching a dead person. In a sense, leprosy was a sign of God's disfavor.
 - Later Jewish practice prescribed that while lepers might attend synagogue, they must be the first to enter and last to leave, and must stay in a special compartment to isolate them from the other worshippers.[2] No less than a distance of four cubits (six feet) must be kept from a leper.[3]
 - To the rabbis, the cure of a leper was as difficult as raising a person from the dead.[4] In all Biblical history only two people had been cured of leprosy -- Miriam, who had leprosy for seven days as a punishment for speaking against Moses' leadership (Numbers 12:9-15), and Naaman, general of the army of Aram, an heathen from Damascus (2 Kings 5). When he obeyed Elijah's instruction to wash seven times in the Jordan River he was healed. Healing a leper had not been done in Israel for seven hundred years, and was thought to be an earmark of the Messianic Age (Luke 7:22), when leprosy would no longer afflict people.[5]
- In the Bible, the word leprosy is mentioned upwards of 40 times, depending on the Bible version being used. Leprosy was common in Bible times, and the many references to it were well understood by those who lived in unsanitary conditions. The main reason why leprosy is talked about so much in the Bible is that it is a graphic illustration of sin's destructive power. In ancient Israel leprosy was a powerful object lesson of the debilitating influence of sin in a person's life.

God had given the Israelites very specific instructions on how to deal with leprosy and other

skin infections (Leviticus 13). Anyone suspected of having this disease had to go to a priest for examination (Leviticus 13:2-3). If found to be infected, “the leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Leviticus 13:45-46). The leper then was considered utterly unclean—physically and spiritually.

Incurable by man, many believed God inflicted the curse of leprosy upon people for the sins they committed. In fact, those with leprosy were so despised and loathed that they were not allowed to live in any community with their own people (Numbers 5:2). Among the sixty-one defilements of ancient Jewish laws, leprosy was second only to a dead body in seriousness. A leper wasn’t allowed to come within six feet of any other human, including his own family. The disease was considered so revolting that the leper wasn’t permitted to come within 150 feet of anyone when the wind was blowing. Lepers lived in a community with other lepers until they either got better or died. This was the only way the people knew to contain the spread of the contagious forms of leprosy.

2. JESUS HEALS LEPERS, AND HIS ATTITUDE TO THEM

In the time of Jesus, Jews believed that sickness was caused either by the sin of the sick person, or by the sin of his relatives. The sickness was sent as a punishment for that sin. It was looked upon as a mark of God’s displeasure. Leprosy was considered to be a very unclean disease. It required not only healing, but also cleansing. A leper would only be pronounced clean after receiving a certificate of cleansing from the High Priest. Jesus respected these laws and insisted that healed lepers obey them.

When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

a. **When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him:**

The miracles of Jesus attracted much attention; but so did His teaching ministry.

Matthew demonstrated this by his mention of the **great multitudes** that followed Him after coming down from the Mount of Beatitudes.

i. When we compare the events of this chapter with the record of Mark or Luke, we find different order and chronology. Carson, along with others, claims that Matthew arranged his material here according to topics and themes, not according to chronology. "Matthew does not purport to follow anything other than a topical arrangement, and most of his 'time' indicators are very loose." (Carson)

ii. We remember an important foundational verse for Matthew's Gospel: Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of

the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people (Matthew 4:23). Matthew went on to tell us about the teaching ministry of Jesus (Matthew 5-7); now he tells us more about the healing ministry of Jesus, and how His works confirmed His words.

b. Behold, a leper came and worshipped Him: In the ancient world, leprosy was a terrible, destructive disease - and still is in some parts of the world. The ancient leper had no hope of improvement, so this **leper came** to Jesus with a great sense of need and desperation.

i. "Leprosy might begin with the loss of all sensation in some part of the body; the nerve trunks are affected; the muscles waste away; the tendons contract until the hands are like claws. There follows ulceration of the hands and feet. Then comes the progressive loss of fingers and toes, until in the end a whole hand or a whole foot may drop off. The duration of that kind of leprosy is anything from twenty to thirty years. It is a kind of terrible progressive death in which a man dies by inches." (Barclay)

ii. According to Jewish law and customs, one had to keep 6 feet (2 meters) from a leper. If the wind was blowing toward a person from a leper, they had to keep 150 feet (45 meters) away. The only thing more defiling than contact with a leper was contact with a dead body.

iii. "In the middle ages, if a man became a leper, the priest donned his stole and took his crucifix, and brought the man into the church, and read the burial service over him. For all human purposes the man was dead." (Barclay)

iv. For all these reasons, the condition of leprosy is a model of sin and its effects. It is a contagious, debilitating disease that corrupts its victim and makes him essentially dead while alive; and it followed that almost universally, society and religious people scorned lepers. Rabbis especially despised lepers, and saw them as people under the special judgment of God, deserving no pity or mercy.

v. In Jesus' time, rabbis sometimes boasted about how badly they treated lepers. One bragged that he refused to buy even an egg on a street where he saw a leper; another boasted that he threw rocks at lepers upon seeing them.

vi. Nevertheless, the leper came to Jesus by himself and despite many discouragements.

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- He knew how terrible his problem was.
- He knew that other people gave up on him as having a hopeless condition.
- He had no one who would or could take him to Jesus.

- He had no previous example of Jesus healing a leper to give him hope.
- He had no promise that Jesus would heal him.
- He had no invitation from Jesus or the disciples.
- He must have felt ashamed and alone in the crowd.

c. **A leper came and worshipped Him:** Despite his desperate condition, this man not only begged Jesus - he also **worshipped Him**.

i. "The Greek verb is *proskenein*, and that word is never used of anything but worship of the gods; it always describes a man's feeling and action in presence of the divine." (Barclay)

ii. How did the leper worship Jesus?

- He **worshipped** Jesus by coming to Him, honoring Him as the One who could meet His otherwise impossible need.
- He **worshipped** Jesus with his posture, probably bowing or kneeling before Jesus.
- He **worshipped** Jesus with the word "**Lord**," honoring Him as master and God.
- He **worshipped** Jesus with his humility, by not demanding but leaving the request up to the will of Jesus.
- He **worshipped** Jesus with his respect of the power of Jesus, saying that all that was necessary was the will of Jesus, and he would be healed.
- He **worshipped** Jesus with his confidence that Jesus could make him more than healthy; Jesus could make him **clean**.

iii. "The leper rendered to Christ divine homage; and if Jesus had been merely a good man, and nothing more, he would have refused the worship with holy indignation." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Those who call Jesus 'Lord,' and do not worship him, are more diseased than the leper was." (Spurgeon)

d. **Lord, if You are willing:** The leper had no doubt whatsoever about the ability of Jesus to heal. His only question was if Jesus was **willing** to heal.

i. He believed in the power of Jesus. When a Syrian commander named Naaman was afflicted with leprosy, he came to Jehoram, the king of Israel because he heard there was a prophet in Israel whom God used to do miraculous things. When Naaman came to Jehoram, Jehoram knew that he had no power to help him, and he said: "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to heal me of his leprosy?" (2 Kings 5:7) Leprosy was so hopeless in the ancient world

that healing a leper was compared to raising the dead; yet this leper knew that all Jesus needed was to be **willing**.

ii. Yet this leper was sure that Jesus was **willing** to use His power for the leper's benefit. "Men more easily believe in miraculous power than in miraculous love." (Bruce)

e. **Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean:** This leper sought more than healing. He wanted cleansing; not only from the leprosy, but also from all its terrible effects on his life and his soul.

i. In addition, this is the first place in the gospel where Jesus is called **Lord**. This title that was particularly meaningful in light of the fact that the word **Lord** was used to translate the Hebrew word Yahweh, and Matthew wrote his gospel to those who would be familiar with the Jewish context of that word.

2. (3) Jesus touches the leper and he is cleansed.

Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

a. **Jesus put out His hand and touched him:** This was a bold and compassionate touch from Jesus. The idea is that the leper kept his distance from Jesus, but He **put out His hand and touched him**. It was against the ceremonial law to touch a leper, which made the touch all the more meaningful to the afflicted man. Of course, as soon as Jesus touched him, he was no longer a leper!

i. **Touched him:** Jesus did not have to touch the leper in order to heal him. He could have healed him with a word or even a thought. Yet He healed the leper with a touch because that is what the leper needed.

ii. Jesus often varied the manner of healing, and usually He chose a particular manner that would be meaningful to the afflicted individual.

iii. Mark 1:41 says when Jesus looked, He was moved with compassion. It had been a long time since this leper had seen a face of compassion.

b. **I am willing:** Jesus' assurance that **I am willing** simply answered the man's question, and gives us a starting point for the times we wonder if Jesus is willing to heal. We should assume Jesus is willing to heal unless He shows us differently.

i. How can we know if Jesus is willing to heal us? By assuming that He is willing, but listening to Him if He should tell us that He does not. This is how it happened

with the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; it seems that Paul assumed that Jesus would heal his thorn in the flesh until word came to him that He would not.

c. **Immediately his leprosy was cleansed:** The former leper's life was changed forever. He was not only healed, but as he requested he **was cleansed**. Jesus had recently said, ask and it will be given to you (Matthew 7:7). This was certainly true for the now **cleansed** former leper.

i. This is the first individual healing described by Matthew. Previously, we were told of Jesus' healing ministry in a general sense (Matthew 4:23-24), but here in a specific case.

3. (4) Jesus commands the healed man to give testimony of his healing to the priests only.

And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

a. **See that you tell no one:** Jesus often commanded people to be quiet about their healing or some miraculous work that He had done for them. He did this because He wanted to keep down the excitement of the crowds until the proper time for His formal revelation to Israel, which was an exact date as prophesied in Daniel 9.

i. In addition, Jesus' miracles were not primarily calculated to make Him famous or a celebrity (though they certainly did give testimony to His ministry). More so, Jesus healed to meet the needs of specific individuals and to demonstrate the evident power of the Messiah in the setting of love and care for the personal needs of humble people.

ii. Therefore, Jesus was cautious about how the multitudes saw Him and why they followed Him. "This motif of secrecy... is better understood as reflecting a real danger that Jesus could achieve unwanted popularity merely as a wonder-worker, or worse still as a nationalistic liberator, and so foster a serious misunderstanding of the true nature of his mission." (France)

iii. Mark tells us that the leper did not obey Jesus and instead he went out and began to proclaim it freely (Mark 1:44-45).

b. **Show yourself to the priest:** Jesus commanded the man to give **a testimony** to the priests, and what a testimony it was! The Mosaic Law prescribed specific sacrifices to be conducted upon the healing of a leper⁶⁵, and when the man reported it to the priests, they no doubt had to perform ceremonies that were rarely (if ever) done (Leviticus 14).

i. Going to the priest would also bring the former leper back into society. Jesus wanted the healing of the man's disease to have as much benefit as possible.

ii. "This gift was two living, clean birds, some cedar wood, with scarlet and hyssop, Leviticus 14:4, which were to be brought for his cleansing; and, when clean, two he lambs, one ewe lamb, three tenth deals of flour, and one log of oil, Leviticus 14:10; but if the person was poor, then he was to bring one lamb, one tenth deal of flour, one log of oil and two turtle doves, or young pigeons, Leviticus 14:21, 22." (Clarke)



• **Jesus heals one leper** - Luke 5:12-16

One day, a man came, covered in leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face to the ground, and begged Jesus to heal him. Jesus reached out and touched him saying, “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him.

Jesus ordered the man not to tell anyone, but to show himself to the Priest to offer sacrifices. But the news spread, and people with sicknesses came to Jesus to be healed. Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray.

The key lesson to be learned from this incident is that sin defiles us in the sight of God, but through Christ, we can be healed of the plague of sin that separates us from God. God loathes sin; it is repulsive to Him. Sin bans us from the presence of God because God will not allow sinful man in His sight and presence (Psalm 5:5; Habakkuk 1:13; Revelation 21:27). This is not only true of sins with a sexual connotation that are normally regarded as filthy and repulsive, but it includes all forms of disobedience and rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23; Proverbs 15:9). All sin is abhorrent to God. But those who have been redeemed from sin by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9) can stand in God’s presence in full confidence that we are accepted “in the Beloved,” and we praise Him for the grace He extends to us for that purpose (Ephesians 1:5-7).

When we’ve captured a glimpse of the holiness and purity of God, we have to exclaim as did the prophet Isaiah, “Woe to me ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5). Our attitude toward sin in the light of our Savior should echo the words of Peter: “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:1-8). Another key lesson we learn from the leper in Matthew’s Gospel is that just as the leper did, we can confidently approach Jesus in all our need, with all our sin and defilement. When we plead for cleansing and forgiveness, He will not turn us away (Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 103:12).

• **Jesus heals ten lepers** - Luke 17:11-19

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men with leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out to Jesus, “Have pity on us!” Jesus said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests”. And as they went, they were healed. When one of them saw that he had been healed, he came back to Jesus, praising God in a loud voice. The man threw himself at Jesus’ feet. The Lord recognised him as a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were there not ten who were cleansed? Where are the nine?” He said to the Samaritan, “Rise and go, your faith has made you well.”

In these two stories, we learn what Jesus’ attitude was towards lepers:

- Compassion and Love
- Pity and Sympathy
- Acceptance of them
- Mixing with them

The Thankful Samaritan (17:15-16)

We're not told how they discover that they are indeed healed, but it probably doesn't take long. Looking at one of his comrades, a leper probably says something like, "Where is your leprosy? Your face is clear. The skin of your hands is soft and even." Then all of them begin to examine themselves and, sure enough, they ARE healed. What a celebration breaks out as they continue on toward the priests' village.

"One of them, when he saw he was healed (iaomai), came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him -- and he was a Samaritan." (17:15-16)

All ten lepers realize they are healed, but only one comes all the way back to Jesus, praising God for his mercy in healing him. The word translated "praising" is Greek doxazo, "praise, honor, extol" and, if God does the glorifying, "to cause to have splendid greatness, 'clothe in splendor, glorify.'" [10] In verse 18, the phrase is "give glory," Greek doxa, "honor as enhancement or recognition of status or performance, 'fame, recognition, renown, honor, prestige.'" [11]

Notice the "loud voice" in verse 15. The lepers have called out loudly to ask for mercy; but only this leper offers loud thanksgiving and praise. Would that our thanksgiving were as loud as our clamoring requests!

The word "thanked" here and in verse 16 is Greek eucharisteo, "to show that one is under obligation, 'be thankful, feel obligated to thank.'" Then to express appreciation for benefits or blessings, 'give thanks, express thanks, render/return thanks.'" [12] We derive our word "Eucharist" from this Greek word.

Notice the thankful leper's response. He throws himself at Jesus' feet as a sign of utter humility. He touches Jesus, no doubt, and Jesus doesn't recoil from him as if he had "cooties." Jesus receives his thanks graciously. The leper (1) gives glory to God and (2) thanks Jesus. The thankful leper may not know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, but certainly he credits Jesus as being God's instrument for his healing.

The Unthankful Nine (17:17-18)

"Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' " (17:17-18)

The word translated "foreigner" (NIV) or "stranger" (KJV) is Greek allogenēs, "foreign," formed from two common words allos, "other" and gennaō, to bear, give birth to." [13] The surprise in this healing is that the only thankful one is a non-Jew. The mixed group of lepers

is presumably made up of both Jews and Samaritans, their common disease uniting them despite their deep divisions of ancestry, religion, and history. But the only one courteous enough to offer thanks is a Samaritan.

This observation concurs with several other indictments of the Jews living in Jesus' day. Jesus points out in the Parable of the Tenants (20:9-19) that, by and large, God's people have rejected his appointed Son. John's Gospel begins with the sad observation, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:11-12).

Your Faith Has Made You Whole (17:19)

The account concludes with Jesus' departing blessing:

"Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.' " (17:19)

The phrase "made you well" (NIV) or "made thee whole" (KJV) is Greek *sozo*, the word commonly translated "to save." A *soter* is a "savior, deliverer" and the noun form *soteria* is used widely of "salvation." *Sozo* in this context means "to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, 'save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue,' specifically, 'safe or free from disease.'" [14]

This passage hints at the fact that Jesus offers this leper more than others. They received healing, but this Samaritan receives a deeper salvation in addition. His faith has prompted him to return to the feet of Jesus in thanks, and that personal contact, that personal submission signifies a soul healing that is more than skin deep

3. JEWISH ATTITUDES AND RULES ON LEPROSY

Among the Jews, leprosy was considered to be a very unclean disease. It required not only healing but also cleansing. There was no known cure for leprosy in Jesus' day and usually lepers died from the disease.

Lepers were pronounced unclean and were excluded from the community. They were to avoid any contact with other people and were even expected to have an appearance of a mourner going to his own death. Lepers were also seen as unkempt figures, with rough untidy hair, and the lower part of their face and upper lip covered.

When a leper saw other people coming near they were ordered to ring a bell and shout, "Unclean! Unclean!" The Law demanded that a leper must keep at least 100 metres away from other people. Only a priest could legally pronounce a leper to be clean, by giving them a certificate of cleansing, after they had gone through an elaborate ritual of cleansing.

WHO WAS A JEW?

Jewish identity in Biblical times had been through two main stages, ethnic and ideological. First, the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became the tribe, then the people, defined by three factors – genealogical (who am I descended from?), geographical (where do I live?) and historical (what events have moulded my history?). The second stage was the ideological. The ethos of the family/tribe/people was now delineated – there was a God, one, invisible and indivisible, who created the world and continued to protect it; He chose the family of Abraham as the ones to carry His torch throughout history; He made known His will in ritual (“Know Him in all your ways”: Prov. 3:6) and ethical terms (“Walk in His ways”: Deut. 13:5 – “as He is merciful, so you be merciful”: b. Sotah 14a).

The term Jew did not emerge until late in Biblical history. Originally it denoted one of the inhabitants of Judea: to be a Jew was to be a Judean. In later rabbinic literature the names “Jew” and “Jewish” are certainly found, but more often it is simply “Israel”. In most cases one was a Jew by birth, defined by tradition as born to a Jewish mother regardless of who the father was, but with the genetic element came the claim of characteristic traits, such as, “A Jew is one who rejects idolatry” (Talmud Megillah 13a), “Jews are modest, compassionate and benevolent” (Midrash Deut. R. 3:4, Talmud Yevamot 79a).

Outsiders could and did enter the Jewish fold. Some were resident aliens (*gerei toshav*) who resided in a Jewish milieu, sometimes marrying a Jew, sometimes living as slaves in a Jewish household and becoming part of the family in the narrower and the wider sense, and adopting Jewish practices. Outsiders regularly attached themselves to the Jewish people in this way. Some (like Ruth with her “Your people will be my people, your God will be my God”: Ruth 1:16-17) made a more deliberate choice of Judaism and were full converts (*gerei tzedek*, literally “righteous proselytes”). In the time of the Second Jewish Commonwealth conversion ceremonies were not yet formulated and the essential requirement was for the applicant to renounce idolatry and accept the God of Israel. A procedural development is found in the story of Hillel telling an applicant, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man: the rest is commentary – go and learn” (b. Shabbat 31a). By the time of Josephus it seems that a person had to “change their way of life, accepting the Judean customs and laws” (Against Apion II:10). What followed was a set procedure of commitment spelled out in rabbinic codes. Between the *gerei toshav* and the *gerei tzedek* was a third group, semi-proselytes or “God-fearers” who though still gentiles were regarded as friends of the Jews.

What made conversion possible was the broadening of the concept of God from the tribal God of the Israelite nation to the universal God of all humanity as described by the Biblical prophets. When it was clear that Judaism was a universalistic faith, formal proselytism could develop; Judaism became eager for converts and so successful that ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire became Jewish; Jewish teachings and ways exerted a fascination both amongst the aristocracy and the common people.

At least up till the middle of the first century CE proselytes were welcomed and accepted readily and in the Roman war of 66-70 CE many showed courage for the Jewish cause. With the destruction of the Temple and the loss of Jewish independence, applicants were warned

that it was hard to be a Jew. Subsequently the policy became more guarded and the fear grew that proselytes would falter in their commitment to Judaism and return to their former ways: it is known that some males tried to obliterate the evidence of their circumcision and a number spread slanders about Judaism and the Jewish people.

Eventually the numbers of converts to Judaism dwindled whilst conversion to Christianity grew. The new faith did not require the strict ritual observances of Judaism and the Christianisation of the Roman Empire endowed Christianity with greater status.

WHO WAS A GENTILE?

The term “gentile” (from “gens”, a race or ethnic group) was not used as such at this period. Much later it became common among Jews to call an outsider a goy, a nation or people, but this term originally meant any nation or people including Israel itself, called in Exodus 19:6 “a kingdom or priests and a holy nation, goy kadosh“. Yet even without a generic term for them, outsiders were certainly acknowledged. The major cleavage of identity was between Israelites and idolaters. Israelites worshipped God; idolaters paid obeisance to idols. Biblical texts poured scorn on those who worshipped gods of wood and stone which they themselves had made. When the Decalogue (Ex. 20:3) commanded, “Have no other gods but Me”, the Jewish sages explained that though other deities were called gods, they were really *elilim*, regarded as deriving from *al*, “not” – and were mere nonentities: no-gods, as it were.

The Hebrew Bible was adamant about uprooting evidence of idolatry. The Mishnah tractate of Avodah Zarah (“Strange Worship”) had much to say about idolatrous gods and their adherents, though its main thrust was not directed at attacking the idolaters themselves and persuading them to abandon their errors, but at the Jews, warning them not to become influenced, even inadvertently, by idolatrous ways and beliefs. Thus a Jew was not to have business dealings with outsiders at the time of idolatrous festivals.[3] A successful business deal with a Jew would at once send the idolater to his deity to give thanks, and no Jew should seem to be supporting idol-worship in this way. The problem with the idolaters, however, was not merely their false theology, but their false ethics, advocating, for instance, the morally repugnant act of child-sacrifice in the name of their idol; it was unthinkable for a Jew to follow in such paths.

But whilst not reneging on its opposition to idolatry, Judaism came to argue that no sensible person would consciously decide to believe in idols when they could believe in God. It preferred to aver that idolatry was not a matter of choice but of habit: “the custom of their fathers is in their hands”. Not just habit but expediency, patriotism and prudence influenced the maintenance of idolatrous practices. Thus the idolatrous festivals which were observed in the non-Jewish environment are identified mostly as celebrations of Imperial events – the emperor’s birthday and even the day he had a haircut (m. Avodah Zarah 1).

The gentiles of that period are seen in Avodah Zarah not as primitive tribes but as otherwise thinking Greeks and Romans, amongst whom not only Aphrodite and Mercury but the

incumbent emperor were deities. Does this mean that first century CE Jews applied the term “gentile” largely to contemporary cultures and powers? To a large extent the answer is yes. They were antagonistic towards the overlords, despite significant instances of social, commercial, intellectual and diplomatic co-operation. The overlords were generally incompetent and oppressive, and Jews could not accord official legitimacy to gentiles who demanded divine honours for themselves. Placing an emperor’s statue in the Temple was a major scandal and a deliberate insult for the Jews. The Jewish prayer service averred, “Our Father, our King, we have no King but You”. Rome was called “the wicked kingdom” and was often referred to in a form of code in rabbinic writings, e.g. by using the name Edom with the meaning of Rome (Midrash Ex. R. 15:6). Rome returned the compliment. “Jews were generally considered in the ancient world,” writes Martin Goodman (*The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome AD 66-70*, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, p. 97), “to be hostile, prickly people, quick to take offence and unfriendly to aliens” (see also Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (vol. 1: Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities), 1974.

Would it ever have been possible for Judaism and the Roman power to live together? It would have required both parties to steer a difficult course through stormy seas. Amongst the Jews there were some who advocated a policy of moderation and appeasement, though theological and cultural differences would have remained. But the Jewish cause was taken over by more fanatical elements, many of whom believed that a messianic cataclysm would overtake the Romans, and God’s rule, however defined, would prove triumphant. There was indeed a cataclysm, but it lasted four years and the outcome was no messianic Utopia. Harsh Roman retaliation prevailed, as it was bound to do, though in the following century Rome acquiesced in a recasting of Jewish religious leadership in Yavneh of a kind that posed no further political or military threat to Imperial dominance.

The Samaritans

Even worse than publicans in the estimation of the Jews were the Samaritans: “The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans that they could possibly avoid. ‘Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil’ was the mode in which the Jews expressed themselves when at a loss for a bitter reproach. The Samaritan was publicly cursed in their synagogues; could not be adduced as a witness in the Jewish courts; could not be admitted to any sort of proselytism; and was thus, so far as the Jew could affect his position, excluded from hope of eternal life.”—*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock and Strong [vol. IX, p. 286]

As an example of the contemptuous attitude of the Jews toward Samaritans note the words recorded in John: “Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:48). Jesus refused to accept the ordinary prejudices of those around him. He did not avoid the Samaritans; he treated them with respect as he did

every human being.

Near the end of his life, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem where he knew he would be crucified, he passed through Samaria and Galilee and was met by ten lepers: “And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (Luke 17:13-19).

Of course it was divine power that made them all whole, coupled with their faith. They all had faith because they did not lift up their voices begging money as was their wont, and because it was only as they were on their way to the priests that they were actually cleansed. And what did they do when they realized they were healed? Nothing, other than to continue on their way—with one exception: the Samaritan, the one so hated by the Jews, returned to express his gratitude and appreciation.

Often we hear of those suffering from diseases for which there is no medical cure. And through prayer and supplication relief and healing may sometimes occur. It is then that the supplicant is most on trial. Does one return with gratitude and appreciation, asking what can be done for the master? Generally it is business as usual. Where are the nine? They were gone.

The tenth chapter of Luke contains what many consider the most beloved parable in the Bible, the parable of the Good Samaritan. An expert in the law asked Jesus a question which had as part of the answer the requirement to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. The lawyer persisted: “But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29). Rather than answering directly, Jesus begins what may not have been initially perceived as a parable. A certain man, nationality unknown, was traveling alone to Jericho. He was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. By chance a priest came by but he elected to not get involved. Soon after a Levite did the same. “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” (Luke 10:33, 34). Jesus then asks the lawyer to answer his own question as to who is his neighbor by asking who was the neighbor to the poor man who had been left for dead. The lawyer was trapped; the answer is so repugnant to him he cannot even say “the Samaritan.” Instead he says, “He that shewed mercy on him” (verse 37).

The priest was not a neighbor, the Levite was ⁷³not a neighbor. Perhaps they reasoned that they had a higher calling; their service to God might be compromised if they became contaminated by touching someone who either was or might soon be dead. One can’t be too careful when one is busy in God’s service. But the Samaritan asks no questions. He sees the plight of the

unfortunate one and he does everything he can to help. The Samaritan in the parable was like our Lord who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

The Gentiles

Luke compiled his gospel as an historian through interviews with those who actually experienced the events. Throughout his account he emphasizes those events that prove God's love is not limited to the Jews. At the very beginning of his gospel he quotes Simeon as saying that Jesus will be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). Two chapters later Jesus has returned to Nazareth, his home town. In the synagogue he stands and reads from Isaiah. He then sits down and begins to comment on the reading. Although they initially are astonished at the gracious words coming from "Joseph's son," their attitude quickly changes when he says he is not going to do healing miracles there as he had done elsewhere. And to emphasize that God's grace is not always directed to those who think they alone qualify for it, he reaches back to the experiences of Elijah and Elisha when a special blessing went to Gentiles. He says: "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:25-27).

The Sidonian woman was not a Jew; the Syrian Naaman was not a Jew. Were there not Jewish widows in the time of Elijah? Were there not Jewish lepers in the time of Elisha? Indeed there were, but they, for whatever reason, did not receive God's grace. An indication of the heart condition of those who heard Jesus can be seen in the reaction described in verse 28: "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath." They tried to kill him, but he passed through their midst and went elsewhere. As he had said in verse 24, "No prophet is accepted in his own country."

In Luke chapter 7 Jesus is at Capernaum. A centurion, a man responsible for 100 military men and thus not a Jew, had a beloved servant who was nigh unto death. He sent for Jesus, but specifies that he is not to trouble himself by actually coming to the house since he knows that just a word would be all that would be required to perform a miracle. Jesus hears this and says, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Luke 7:9). Once again it is a Gentile who surpasses those who thought they were God's special ones.

At the end of his gospel, Luke records the words of the risen Lord who tells the disciples that the wonderful gospel message was something that was for **all** nations, not just the Jews: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name **among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46,47).

Lessons for Us

It is always easiest to live like everyone else, sharing their prejudices. But Jesus did not live that way. He considered all human beings to be worth his time and his attention. He indulged none of the common prejudices of his day. He willingly spent time with women, children, tax collectors, prostitutes, and even the hated Samaritans.

Do we live as he did? Or do we share the prejudices of those around us, thinking our time is best spent with others who are just like we are, thinking that since we are in the full-time service of God we have no time for those less fortunate than ourselves? Our Master made time to speak with the poor, with children, and even with those who were openly sinful or might be considered unacceptable by the leaders of his society. Since God has predestinated that we be “made like his Son,” we are to follow that pattern and do the same.

Like Luke, we were attracted to the gospel message because someone was faithful to the commission to preach the name of Jesus among all nations. Since we are to be like our Master, let us not draw arbitrary distinctions among ourselves and among others based on age, sex, wealth, or social standing. In our witnessing we must never judge whom the Lord is calling. He decides to whom his grace and favor will be extended and then uses those who are willing to be his instruments of blessing.

The poor in this world’s goods may be just what the Lord is looking for because he does not look on the outside, he reads the heart: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him” (James 2:5).

True riches are not on earth, they are in heaven: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”—Luke 12:32-34, NIV

Where is your treasure? You will know by looking at where your heart is, what you think and talk about when you have opportunity. It could be your business, your investments, your career, your home, or any of a variety of places where “moth destroys and thieves come near.”

May we continue to keep our heart on our treasure in heaven, knowing that if we are faithful even unto death, we will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

4. ATTITUDE TO SICKNESS, DISABILITY AND HIV/AIDS IN ZAMBIA

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- **Sickness.** Sickness is ill health. There are many types of sicknesses, for example: malaria, influenza (flu), cholera and sore eyes. They cause worry and concern when they strike a household.
- **Disability.** A disability is something that makes us not able to do certain things. Some disabilities are visible and severe, for example: the physically handicapped and the blind.
- **HIV/AIDS.** The letters AIDS stand for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by a virus called Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV). This virus can be in a person's body for a long time without making them suffer from AIDS. It is difficult to tell if a person is HIV positive or not, unless diagnosed by the doctor.

The virus is transmitted in several ways, for example: sexual acts with an infected person, a transfusion with infected blood, through contaminated needles or razor blades. It cannot be transmitted by touching, sharing utensils, toilets or living with an infected person.

The most common way that HIV/AIDS can be transmitted from one person to another is by having sex with an infected person. People can protect themselves from acquiring HIV/AIDS, by abstaining. The secular world advises people to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS by using condoms. The Christian teaching however, emphasises abstinence. Being faithful to one another is the safest way of protection for married couples, and abstaining from fornication before marriage.

There are many symptoms which would indicate that a person is HIV positive. Some of these are:

- prolonged diarrhoea
- prolonged cough
- weakness and tiredness
- itchy skin rashes
- a fever that lasts for a long time
- TB

People suffering from any disease, no matter how minor or severe, need care and love. Sick people need help and encouragement. However, there are some people who show no compassion for the sick and disabled.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY APPROACH FOR HIV-POSITIVE CHILDREN

Occupational Therapy (OT) is a relatively unknown rehabilitation specialty in Zambia. OT deals with children with a wide variety of diagnoses and functional problems, including HIV-infected children, using a holistic approach⁵. Acknowledging that environmental factors influence a child's ability, OT insists on active participation of parents/care givers and values community involvement. Best practice treatment models

include the Sensory Integration (SI) approach from Ayres and the Neuro-developmental treatment (NDT) from Bobath.^{20, 21}

Play is considered a primary childhood occupation and the key to development for children. Through play, children learn about the world around them, developing skills and interests that later affect choices and success in school, work and leisure. Hence, play is used in OT as a therapeutic medium; to assess and determine a child's level of development in performance areas, to reflect upon their development and to build up specific functional skills.^{20, 21}

OT assessment of HIV-infected children is done by interviewing the mother or caregiver, and through observations of spontaneous and stimulated play, intake forms and assessment tools. In Zambia, a manual from Ministry of Education is available for child development assessment.²²

5. JESUS CALMS THE STORM AND FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE

In the two stories about Jesus calming the storm, and feeding the five thousand people, it was neither the faith of an individual nor other people that was involved. Jesus performed these two miracles because He had sympathy and concern for the needs of other people.

• **Jesus calming the storm** - Luke 8:22-25

Jesus and his disciples got into a boat and went over to the other side of the lake. As they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. A storm blew over the lake so that the boat began to sink. The disciples went to wake Him, saying "Master, Master, we are drowning." Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters. The storm subsided and all was calm. Jesus asked His disciples, "Where is your faith?" In fear and amazement they asked themselves, "Who is this man, who can command even the winds and the waters, and they obey Him?"

This miracle shows two aspects of Jesus' character: His Humanity by His tiredness and sleep, and His Divinity by His power over the wind and the waves. It also shows that though the disciples had faith in Jesus, they had little faith that Jesus could calm the storm.

Late in the afternoon, the apostles came to Jesus telling Him, "Master send the people to the surrounding villages to look for food and lodging." Jesus said to the apostles, "Give the people something to eat". They replied, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish; unless we go to buy food for the five thousand people." Jesus told them, "Make the people sit in groups of fifty." The disciples did so and everybody sat down.

Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven and gave thanks, and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to⁷⁷ set before the people. All the five thousand people ate and were satisfied. Afterwards, the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of left overs.

From this incident, Christians learn that Jesus is the only one who can satisfy both the

physical and spiritual needs of the people. Without Jesus, the disciples could not even supply the physical needs of the people.

6. MIRACLES IN MODERN CHRISTIAN TIMES

Many Christians believe that miracles occur in the will of God, because they see definite results through their prayers, or those of other people. They believe miracles occur because they believe in a miracle working God, and because of the miraculous birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

However, believers know that miracles can be performed through satanic powers, too. People may have seen supernatural happenings which are not from God, but which have been performed through the power of Satan. For example: magic, divination, and the witchdoctors' power are from Satan, and should be left completely alone.

However, there are some people who do not believe in miracles. They have their own reasons for holding such views, for example:

- unbelief in the miracle working God.
- unbelief in a miracle itself.
- lack of proof or evidence.

7. MIRACLES IN CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

In all religions, the followers believe that miracles occur. However, the basis for believing in miracles varies from one religion to another. There are however, a few similarities and differences of beliefs about miracles, between Zambian traditional religion, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims.

Zambian Tradition:

- God performs unusual things through his chosen people.
- Only special people can perform miracles.
- Miracles are performed through the help of the ancestral spirits.
- Miracles increase the influence and reputation of the people who perform them.

• A Lusaka woman who miraculously healed a 21 year-old Kalomo man with a rare skin condition has revealed her story behind her healing power. Ms Getrude Phiri, 56, of Lusaka's Mtendere area also says she is not a traditional doctor but was only driven by a strong feeling of sympathy to discover the herbal medicine that healed Mapenzi Milambo following his appeal for help on Muvi Television. Ms Phiri says it is at this point that she thought of prescribing the formula that was given to her by her mother to treat ring worms on her child twenty years ago. Ms Phiri has since become a heroin after healing Mapenzi of a dead skin in what people are calling a miracle. Mapenzi, had lived with a rare skin condition for 21 years of which medical doctors both locally and internationally failed to treat.

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Christianity:

Christians believe in miracles for the following reasons:

- The virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus.
- Belief in a miracle working God.
- Miracles help to restore confidence in the power of God.
- God performs unusual things through holy people.
- Even ordinary people can perform miracles as long as they are holy and have faith.
- The test of the genuine is not the ability to do miracles, but conformity and obedience to God's will, Matthew 7:21-23.

Islam:

Miracle" in the Qur'an can be defined as a supernatural intervention in the life of human beings. According to this definition, miracles are present "in a threefold sense: in sacred history, in connection with Muhammad himself and in relation to revelation. The Qur'an does not use the technical Arabic word for miracle (Mu'djiza) literally meaning "that by means of which [the Prophet] confounds, overwhelms, his opponents". It rather uses the term 'Ayah' (literally meaning sign). The term Ayah is used in the Qur'an in the above-mentioned threefold sense: it refers to the "verses" of the Qur'an (believed to be the divine speech in human language; presented by Muhammad as his chief Miracle); as well as to miracles of it and the signs (particularly those of creation).

To defend the possibility of miracles and God's omnipotence against the encroachment of the independent secondary causes, some medieval Muslim theologians such as Al-Ghazali rejected the idea of cause and effect in essence, but accepted it as something that facilitates humankind's investigation and comprehension of natural processes. They argued that the nature was composed of uniform atoms that were "re-created" at every instant by God. Thus if the soil was to fall, God would have to create and re-create the accident of heaviness for as long as the soil was to fall. For Muslim theologians, the laws of nature were only the customary sequence of apparent causes: customs of God.

Sufi biographical literature records claims of miraculous accounts of men and women. The miraculous prowess of the Sufi holy men includes firasa (clairvoyance), the ability to disappear from sight, to become completely invisible and practice buruz (exteriorization). The holy men reportedly tame wild beasts and traverse long distances in a very short time span. They could also produce food and rain in seasons of drought, heal the sick and help barren women conceive.

- Muslims believe that at God's command, prophets performed unusual and extraordinary deeds. 79
- Muslims also believe that sometimes Allah (God) performs unusual things through holy men.
- Only holy men can be used to perform miracles.
- Miracles increase the influence and reputation of holy men.

- Only God performs the actual miracles.

Hinduism:

In Hinduism, miracles are focused on episodes of liberation of the spirit. A key example is the revelation of Krishna to Arjuna, wherein Krishna persuades Arjuna to rejoin the battle against his cousins by briefly and miraculously giving Arjuna the power to see the true scope of the Universe, and its sustainment within Krishna, which requires divine vision. This is a typical situation in Hindu mythology wherein "wondrous acts are performed for the purpose of bringing spiritual liberation to those who witness or read about them."

Hindu sages have criticized both expectation and reliance on miracles as cheats, situations where people have sought to earn a benefit without doing the work necessary to merit it. Miracles continue to be occasionally reported in the practice of Hinduism, with an example of a miracle modernly reported in Hinduism being the Hindu milk miracle of September 1995, with additional occurrences in 2006 and 2010, wherein statues of certain Hindu deities were seen to drink milk offered to them.

- Hindus believe that miracles performed by a person are not proof of his divinity.
- Miracles increase people's faith in God,
- Miracles can be performed through satanic powers.

Even ordinary people can perform miracles.



77 people were killed when this military transport plane came down in Algeria. A young soldier was the ONLY survivor of a plane crash in Algeria that left 77 dead. The passengers were on board a military transport plane which came down in Oum El Bouaghi province, 300 miles east of the capital Algiers. The soldier, who was understood to be in a critical condition, was the only survivor. He is just the latest in a series of incredible stories of human survival.



Matthew Allen Outback to safety A teenager feared dead after he went missing for two months miraculously turned up in the Australian bush. Matthew Allen, 18, was discovered partially blind and covered in leeches and insect bites by two hikers nine weeks after he walked out on his family on a "survival mission". He had lost 30-40kg since disappearing from the family home north of Sydney on November 27, 2013 and was suffering from gangrene.

Big match horror



Emergency: Fabrice Muamba is carried off the field

After collapsing on the pitch during an FA Cup tie with Tottenham Hotspur Bolton player Fabrice Muamba's heart stopped beating for 78 minutes. The footballer's amazing recovery after doctors said that "in effect, he was dead during that time", has been called a medical miracle.

A model patient

Katrina Burgess was told by doctors she may never walk again after surviving a 70mph car crash on the M5 in Somerset with a broken neck and back, two punctured lungs, broken pelvis, left leg and ribs.

Surgeons saved the 17-year-old's life and reconstructed her using 11 metal rods and dozens of pins and screws after the accident in 2009. Astonishingly, within five months of the crash, the teenager from Weymouth, Dorset, recovered and even signed a modelling deal.

A clean recovery



Window cleaning brothers Alcides and Edgar Moreno fell 47 stories when the cable securing their cleaning platform snapped in 2007. They had not been wearing safety harnesses as they

washed the New York apartment building's windows and after falling 500 feet Edgar, 30, was killed instantly.

Married father-of-three Alcides, then 37, was left in a coma with multiple fractures of his ribs, right arm and both legs as well as damage to his spinal cord. Alcides not only made a full recovery but was able to walk again. Dr Philip Barrie, from New York-Presbyterian Hospital, said: "If you're a believer in miracles, this would be one. I've seen it all – or at least I think I have – until something like this happens."

Back from the brink



Lorna and daughter Leanne Mum-of-four Lorna Baillie was declared "technically dead" after suffering a massive heart attack. Her family were brought in to say goodbye as doctors waited for her heart to stop beating. But within 45 minutes of being told Lorna, 49, could not be revived, her family noticed signs of breathing and she was rushed into intensive care. Eldest daughter Leanne Porteous said: "My dad said, 'Lorna, come back. I love you', and then just

like that, she was there again.” The former auxiliary nurse, from East Lothian, is still - recovering from last month’s heart attack. Leanne said: “It has been a whirlwind of emotions for our family. Dr David Farquharson, medical director of NHS Lothian, said: “This type of recovery is extremely rare.”

Angry hippo attack



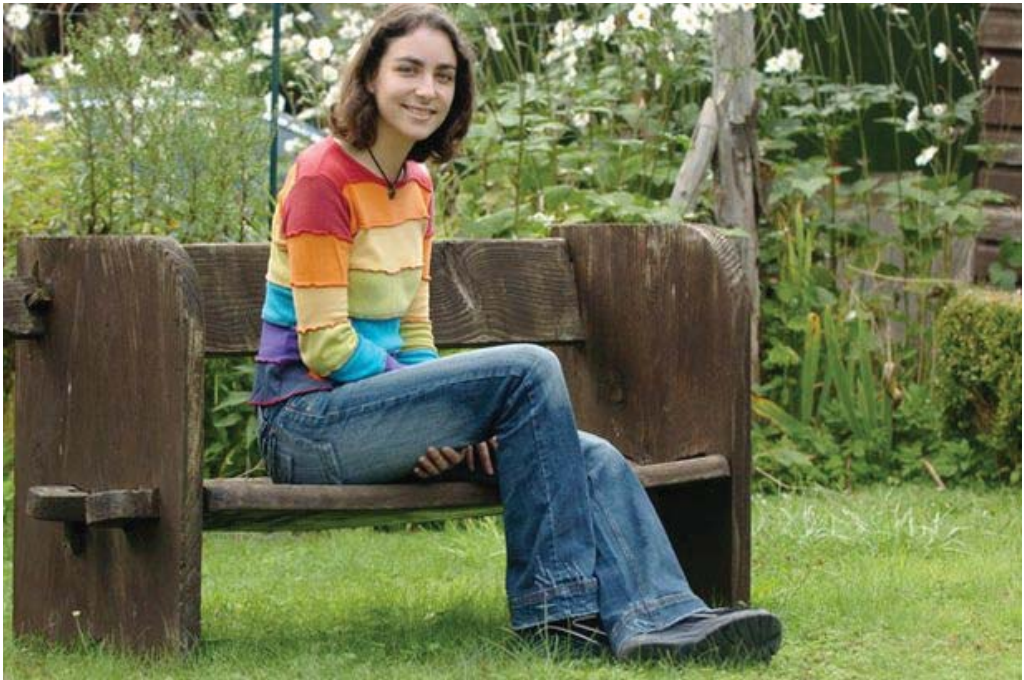
After serving in the British Army and travelling the world, Paul Templer settled down in his native Zimbabwe and became a river guide. During one trip in 1995, he was leading a group of tourists down the Zambezi River when they came under attack from a bull hippo. The beast threw another guide into the water and Templer jumped in to save him, but the hippo attacked, swallowing Templer head first.

Its huge upper teeth pierced his armpits, punctured his back, pinning both arms to his sides. Somehow, he levered himself out of the hippo’s jaws but the hippo mauled Templer several more times, ripping his foot, severing his arm, breaking ribs and tearing holes in his back and chest. After a seven hour operation, which involved the amputation of his arm, Templer began the road to recovery and still leads safari trips.

Surviving snow drifts



Peter Skyllberg was trapped for two months in his car after it became bogged down in snow drifts near the town of Umea in northern Sweden. The 44-year-old was pulled from his trapped vehicle in January having survived on nothing but snow and snacks, while temperatures plunged as low as minus 30 outside. Skyllberg is thought to have gone into a state of hibernation, which slowed his metabolism and left him emaciated, barely able to speak or move.



Sky-diving fanatic Lyndi Harding was in California with friends for the trip of a lifetime. But in April 2001 as the 27 year-old from Ledbury, Herts, hurtled towards the ground after jumping from a plane at 8,500ft, the unthinkable happened and Lyndi's parachute failed to open. The parachute cord got tangled in the reserve and Lyndi plummeted for 40 seconds at 70mph before crashing to the ground. She sustained two fractured ribs, a punctured lung, a broken nose and a chipped tooth. She said: "The doctors thought I'd passed out before hitting the ground and it had saved me because my body was relaxed." In 2008 Lyndi made another jump – and this time her chute opened. Read Lyndi's story in full: [I fell 4,000 feet.. and survived!](#)

Lessons for Disciples

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What are we disciples supposed to learn from all this? Perhaps most obvious is that outsiders are sometimes more responsive than God's own people. Sad to say, but being a certified believer can sometimes result in spiritual deafness. Consider some of the long-time members of your own church. Are they necessarily the most spiritually mature or deep? We are wrong

if we assume that Christians are the only ones who have spiritual acuity. Jesus is in the business of saving sinners. He doesn't discriminate on the basis of their religion or lack of it.

The weeks following the terrorist attack on New York and Washington have been remarkable in that previously unreligious people are now talking about God. All sorts of people are aware of their need for God as never before. What an awakening! May it continue and deepen. Don't be surprised to see a sudden event trigger thanks in a Samaritan. It can happen.

Acting in Faith

Once central lesson of this story is that the faith that healed the lepers was by acting on Jesus' words. Jesus said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests," implying that they were healed. If they had done a quick physical check to see if they were healed before they headed off to the priests' village they never would have started. The healing didn't take place until AFTER they obeyed. We sometimes want instantaneous healing before we'll believe that Jesus heals us. But the faith here is shown in the going. "Your faith has made you well" (17:19b).

I don't recommend throwing away pills, firing doctors, or discontinuing treatment before the healing is manifest. That isn't what Jesus asked the lepers to do. Rather we can turn from a fear-filled faith to an expectant faith. We can turn a corner to a new way of seeing what God is doing and will do. And perhaps we should make an appoint with the doctor -- the modern-day equivalent of going to the priests for a physical exam. These can be acts of faith.

Healing Multiple People from a Distance

Another sometimes overlooked lesson is that Jesus can heal people from a distance, without touching them or the laying on of hands. In the Twentieth Century we saw a resurrection of a healing ministry within the Body of Christ -- at least in churches where there was faith that this could happen. The most visible model has been a prayer line with the healer laying his hands on the afflicted person, and healing often (if not always) resulting. A couple of examples might be Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn. But there's a less visible model -- that of effecting healing from a distance.

One of the most influential, but least known, healing evangelists of the last half of the Twentieth Century is T.L. Osborne. Most of his ministry was in mass meetings in third world countries. His team would go, set up a raised platform and some loud speakers, and begin to hold meetings. T.L. Osborne had learned from God that people could be healed by speaking the word of healing to a group. Osborne would bring simple gospel messages, proclaim healing, and people all over the growing sea of listeners would find themselves healed. Then they would make their way to the platform to tell others about it, and tell their friends when they went home. The next night the crowd would swell even more. I saw this kind of remote healing operating through Kathryn Kuhlman in the 1960s. Other examples have been healing through words of knowledge uttered at a distance. Faith must be operative, certainly, but healing doesn't have to take place one-to-one.

Now I know that many are skeptical about these kinds of things. We've been conditioned by our church's teaching and by TV and movie caricatures to be skeptical. And, indeed, too often there has been a phony showmanship, a disheartening stretching of the truth, and occasional out-and-out immorality among healing evangelists. But that doesn't mean none of these people had a genuine healing gift. One of the hard lessons of my own spiritual maturing has been a jolting realization that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit have little to do with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Samson is my case in point. Speaking in tongues and healing may signify God at work through a person but are not indication of holiness. When God can find a person with faith to heal AND a character submitted to Jesus Christ, then the confusion clears and people can be won to Christ and disciplined effectively, and the whole Church moves forward.

My point here is that we disciples need to consider Jesus' example of healing up-front and personal as well as healing at a distance -- considering the ten lepers and the Centurion's servant (7:2-10). Healing is certainly one of the much-used tools in Jesus' evangelistic ministry. We disciples need to reclaim a healing ministry for the Church -- and for the sake of a lost world.

Our Gratitude Is Expected

A clear lesson is that Jesus expects us to show gratitude. In the account of the Thankful Leper, Jesus is clearly angry at the unthankfulness of the nine lepers who didn't return. We must train ourselves to show thanks, to give thanks, to be filled with thanksgiving. Without being thankful disciples we won't be pleasing to Jesus.

But this thankfulness is sometimes time-consuming. Sometimes it requires going out of our way, delaying some of our urgent appointments. A life of thanksgiving is a life of prayer. Prayer first. Before going to the priests to be declared healed. Prayer first. Before the things we have to do. Prayer first. Before we get immersed in our everyday activities. Prayer first. Thanksgiving first

Finally, gratitude is an important component in our salvation. Were all ten lepers healed? Yes. Were they all saved? Yes, in the sense that they were rescued from their disease. But not in the sense of drawing close to God in thankfulness and dependence. The nine were saved physically but not spiritually. "Where are the other nine?" Jesus asks. Healing that doesn't bring a person to Jesus is incomplete and stunted. A healing ministry cannot stand alone. It is part of the wholeness of salvation that God desires. That's why our ministry should include healing but in the context of a ministry of full salvation followed by the healed person beginning to follow Jesus as his disciple in the fellowship of the church.

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came⁸⁸ back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him -- and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?' " (17:15-17)

God grant that we will on occasion be thankful enough to be boisterously thankful. Thankful enough to throw ourselves at Jesus' feet. And thankful enough to voice Jesus' question as our own, "Where are the other nine?" and help them find their way home, too.

EXERCISE

1. Relate in your own words the following events:
 - (a) Jesus heals one leper
 - (b) Jesus heals ten lepers.
2. Complete the table below to show how one can, or cannot, contract HIV/AIDS.

One can contract HIV/AIDS by: One cannot contract HIV/AIDS by:

3. Compare beliefs in miracles in Christianity with those of other religions.
4. Some of your friends may say they do not believe in miracles. State the reasons they would give for not believing in miracles.
5. Below are two stories. Relate each one of them and state what Christians learn about Jesus from each story.
 - (a) Jesus feeding five thousand people.
 - (b) Jesus calms the storm.
6. Explain Jewish rules about leprosy.
7. Your friend refuses to greet a leper by a handshake, saying the disease is contagious. State the Christian advice you would give to your friend with regard to attitude towards lepers.
8. What was the Jewish attitude to lepers?
9. Why did Jesus perform miracles?
10. Explain why Christians believe in miracles.
11. Below are four stories, choose any three and relate them.
 - (a) The paralysed man.
 - (b) The man with a withered hand.
 - (c) The man with dropsy.

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UNIT III

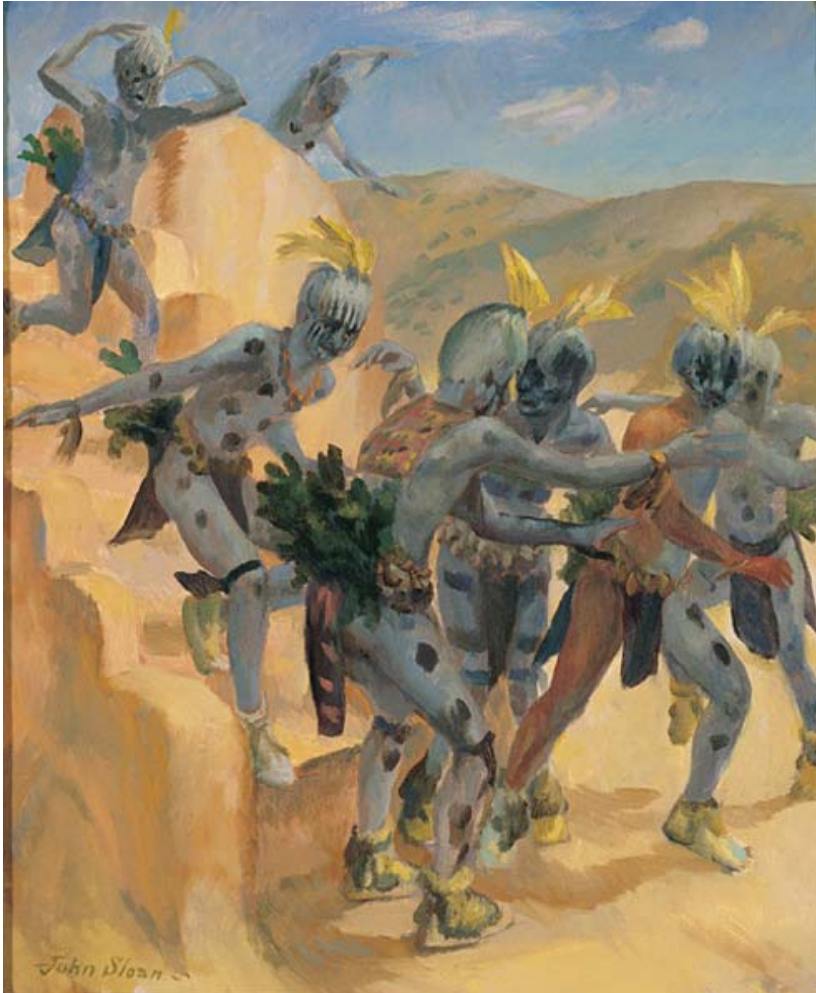
JESUS' POWER OVER EVIL SPIRITS

1. SPIRIT POSSESSION IN ZAMBIAN TRADITION

- i. State what they have heard about spirit possession in modern Zambia.
- ii describe various attitudes to and treatment of different kinds of spirit possession in traditional and modern Zambia.
- iii. list various kinds of spirits believed in traditionally in Zambia.
- iv. Relate the three stories of Jesus casting out evil spirits found in Luke's Gospel.
- v. Explain the attitude of Jews at the time of Jesus towards pigs.
- vi. Describe the attitude towards spirit possession in Palestine at the time of Jesus.
- vii. show the connection between Jesus casting out evil spirits and the coming of the Kingdom of God. - compare the Christian attitudes to and treatment of spirit possession with other attitudes to and treatment of spirit possession.
- viii. distinguish between the Holy Spirit and other kinds of spirit in Christian teaching

In Zambian traditional religion, it is believed that there are various kinds of spirit. The prominent ones are:

- **Ancestral Spirits:** These are spirits of the ancestors which do not possess people. They act as overseers and protectors of the living relatives. They are also called spirits of the living dead.



The distress caused to us descendants by ancestral spirits manifests in many ways in our day-to-day lives. It creates obstacles in both, our worldly lives as well as spiritual practice. In some cases, it may seem that the entire family has a dark cloud over it and various family members are undergoing various problems, despite all efforts to overcome them. The difficulties that are created due to ancestral spirits come in various forms such as marital disharmony, addictions, miscarriages and financial problems. At an intellectual level, we can use two rules of thumb to decide if the cause of suffering is spiritual in nature. The first rule is if all remedies to solve the problem have failed

- **Dissatisfied Spirits:** These are spirits of people who once lived in society but were disgruntled. They are harmful, and are also called, troublesome spirits. They are believed to be responsible for certain diseases and conditions such as epilepsy, dumbness, death and childlessness.
- **Good Spirits:** These are called guardian possession spirits, which advise people. They are consulted to heal and to protect.
- **Bad Spirits:** These are spirits of nature, which are evil. They control certain parts of nature, such as mountains, rivers and forests. These spirits are not good and must be driven out.

Methods of Keeping Spirits away:

There are various methods used to keep bad spirits away. These are:

- **Charms:** The charms are worn on the body of a person. They are also put in the roof of a house or in the doorway to scare spirits away.
- *
- **Lotions:** Special lotions are prepared to keep spirits away. Spirits don't like the heavy smells of these lotions, so they keep away.
- **Tattoos:** Some people make tattoos on their bodies and rub in medicines. This also keeps spirits away.

2. ATTITUDES TO AND TREATMENT OF SPIRITS IN ZAMBIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

It is believed that there are various kinds of spirits. The attitudes to these **spirits** vary from one area to another. However, the general understanding is that:

- The good spirits act as overseers and protectors of the living. Therefore, they do not keep them away. They are welcomed as part of the living community.
- Bad spirits are believed to be responsible for certain diseases and conditions such as dumbness, epilepsy, death and childlessness. They also cause fear, hence the need to drive them out.
- Ancestral Spirits are spirits of ancestors. They do not possess people. They act as overseers and protectors of the living relatives. They are respected and revered by the people.

Treatment of Spirit possession

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When people are found to be spirit possessed, the spirits are driven out (exorcised) by the use of charms, drumming, dancing and special ceremonies. People in Zambian traditional religion have a lot of confidence in these methods of treating possessed people.

We are all aware of the sometimes mysterious traditional Zambian diseases that defy Western science, medical diagnosis, treatment, and understanding. Among the Tumbuka, for example, what is the disease of vimbuza spiritual possession and why do the ng'anga healers among the Tumbuka people prescribe vimbuza spiritual dance for treating this spiritual possession instead of modern Western antidepressants drugs or therapy? Why do Zambians both educated and uneducated, including myself, continue to consult traditional healers for certain diseases for which Western medicine has no cure or answer? The answer may be the hormone Black Melanin. It was for me like a flash of a bright window had opened. Suddenly I could explain many ideas, beliefs, problems of health, customs, spirituality about us Zambians and Africans that had been passed down among us the Bantu people to our grand fathers going back to our ancestors over 150 thousand to millions of years ago. I was so excited that I had to send a short email to Dr. Chisanga Siame because I knew he would be the only one who would understand what I was talking about. I may have finally found the answer



What is Black Melanin?

Melanin is a hormone which is found in virtually all parts of the human body, animals, plants, in nature in general including the universe. “The dark color or pigment of the human body that is found internally as well as externally is called melanin.” (Moore, 2002:20) Hormones released from cells or glands in the body are responsible for the proper functioning of the body in terms of firing messages between various significant organs of the body especially proper cell functioning .

The body of existing descriptions and discussion of the complexity of melanin which are relatively objective scientific discussions of melanin include the advantages of black melanin in the functioning of the body, its protective capabilities as a neutralizer, nerve conductor, and energy transformer. The black melanin plays a fundamental role in the nervous system, endocrine system, the pigment layer in the retina of the visual system, the auditory system in human hearing, and finally in the skin and its hormones .



3. JESUS HEALS DEMON POSSESSED PEOPLE

Jesus had full control over the evil spirits, and to cast them out was not difficult. His opponents attributed his power to Satan (Luke 11:15). He shared His victory over demons with his followers, giving them the power to cast them out. Jesus Himself healed many people who were demon possessed during his ministry here on earth. Some examples to consider are explained below:

- **The Gerasene demoniac** - Luke 8: 26-39

The Jews believed that demons, or evil spirits, belonged to Satan's kingdom, Luke 11:14-26.

Evil spirits recognised that Jesus was the Son of God. This showed His authority and power over the spirit world.

People possessed by demons display such symptoms as dumbness (Luke 11:14); fitting similar to epilepsy (Mark 9:17ff) madness, and blindness.

In this story, Jesus showed His supreme authority over the spirit world and granted the request of the spirits to enter into the pigs. The pigs, under the influence of the demons, rushed into the water and were drowned. So the demons still had no physical bodies through which to exercise their influence. The owners of the pigs were more concerned about their means of making a living, than about the man who was healed.

- **The man in the synagogue** - Luke 4:31-38

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee. On the Sabbath, He began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teachings because he preached with authority.

In the synagogue, there was a man with an evil spirit, who cried out at the top of his voice. Jesus sternly rebuked the demon. It immediately left the man without hurting him. This caused all the people to be amazed because Jesus taught and acted with authority and power.

- **The demon possessed boy** - Luke 9:37-43

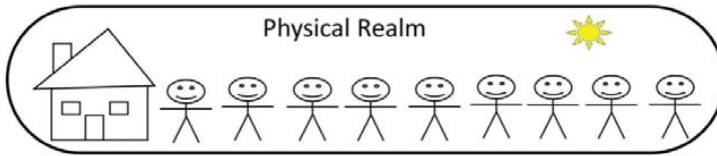
When they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd came to Jesus. Suddenly a man from the crowd cried out, saying, "Teacher! I implore you, look on my son for he is my only child. A spirit seizes the boy and he suddenly convulses and foams at the mouth. I implored your disciples to cast it out but they could not." Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and presented him to his father.

4. THE TWO KINGDOMS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

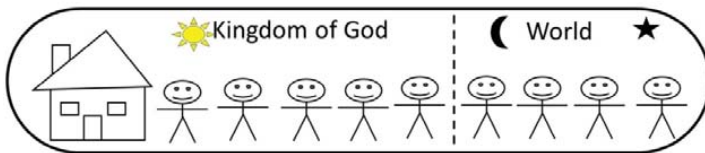
In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This was not just earth and sky. "The heavens" is the biblical name for the spiritual world that exists in parallel to the physical world. God created a multi-dimensional universe. We can only see the three dimensions of physical space plus time, so we assume that is all that exists. The spiritual dimensions consist of many more dimensions of reality beyond what we can see.

We cannot see into the spiritual world due to the effects of sin, so we think that the physical world we see makes up most of the universe. This leads us to assume that the authority systems that we see on earth are important, but we miss the parallel authority systems that exist in the spiritual realms and frequently interact with the authority system on earth. To understand the full working of authority, we need a thorough understanding of the way that authority functions in the spiritual realms, and how it affects events on earth.

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Growing up in the modern world, we are taught that the physical world is all that is important. If something cannot be scientifically observed, it is not real. We all imbibe this materialistic understanding of the world during our education and daily lives. We think that the physical world that we live in is all that exists.



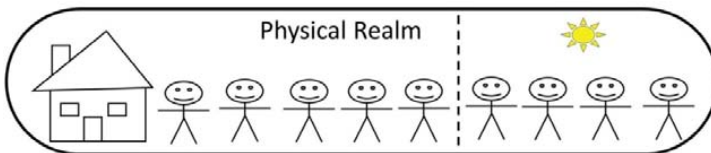
The physical realms consist of the earth, the sea and the sky. It includes people and the things they have made. This realm of life can be partitioned into two parts. The people who live according to Gods will are part of the Kingdom of God. Those who reject God's will belong to "the world" (1 John 2:15-17). In reality, these two groups are mixed up together and interact with each other all the time. I have only portrayed them separately for the purpose of illustration.



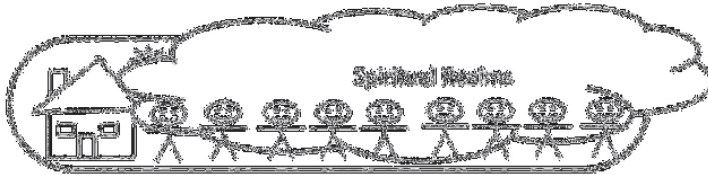
Spiritual Realms

Christians need a new worldview, that that sees the spiritual realms operating over and alongside the physical realms. We need an awareness of authority in the spiritual realms, if we are to understand the functioning of authority here on earth.

Part of the problem is that we see God as "way up there" far away from our world. We think of heaven as a distant place that we go to where we die. This is short sighted.



Heaven is not a distant place where God lives. Nor is just a place that we go to when we die. The Bible refers to the "heavenlies" as a label for the spiritual realms that exist alongside the physical world. The spiritual realms are just as real as the physical world that we can see. These two realms overlap and interact with each other.



We live in a multi-dimensional universe in which the spiritual dimensions exist in parallel to our three-dimensional physical world. The spiritual realms operate in continuity with the physical/natural world that we observe. Most humans cannot see into the spiritual dimensions, so we can only observe the physical side of existence. However, events in our physical world are shaped by activities in the spiritual realm. When we look at the physical world in isolation, we miss much of what is happening in the universe.

God operates in the spiritual dimensions of reality, but he also created and sustains the physical world. After the creation, the Holy Spirit remained close to the earth.

The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Gen 1:2).

The Spirit was not in a distant place. The spiritual realms where he operates hover over the earth. The spiritual dimensions of reality are not way out at the edge of the universe, they exist in parallel to the physical world in which we live. These two realms of existence interact with each other in ways that we often cannot see, and fail to understand.

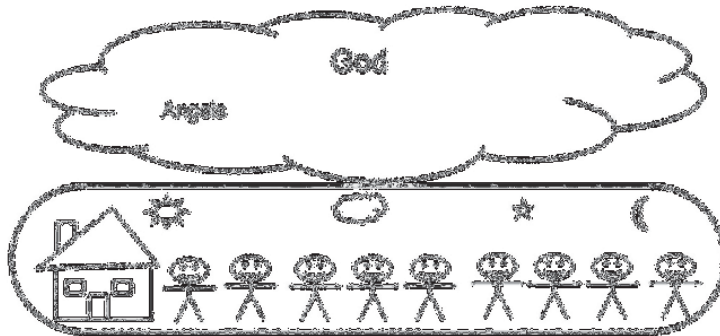
I am not sure how many Christians understand these things. Three hundred years ago, almost everyone understood their world in this way. Many people in Africa still think this way, although they focus too much on the dark side of the spiritual. Now, under the relentless pressure of education and the enlightenment, interest in the spiritual dimension of life is labelled old fashioned and superstitious.

I also wonder how many Christians understand these things, but do not live them. How many live as if the spiritual realms are irrelevant?

Many Christians are looking inward to establish connecting with the Holy Spirit. This is good, but if we ignore what is happening in the spiritual realms that surround us, we will misunderstand much of what happens in the world.⁹⁸ Most Christians need a vastly expanded worldview.

The previous picture correctly shows how the spiritual and physical realms overlap each other. However, in the remainder of the article, I will place the spiritual realms just above the

physical realms so that the interactions between them can be illustrated, but we must always remember that these two worlds overlap and exist in parallel to each other.



Multi-dimensional

The spiritual realms are not limited to three dimensions like our physical world. The Bible does not tell us how many more, but the fact that it is more complex than our three-dimensional world means that it is hard for our minds to understand. The spiritual aspect of life can be thought of as additional dimensions beyond the three core dimensions of length, height and breadth. The spiritual world is not another world in another place, but additional dimensions to the physical world we observe.

An even better way might be to think of the physical world as three additional dimensions tacked on to a multi-dimension spiritual world. The spiritual world is more real than the physical world, so this latter view is most likely correct, but it is very hard for us to handle, because our eyes are calibrated for a physical world. Our eyes are so attuned to seeing a three-dimensional world, that we find anything grander difficult to conceive.

Paul visited the spiritual realms in a vision. He was dramatically affected by what he saw, but he could not describe it (2 Cor 12:2-4). His problem was that human language is designed for describing a physical world, so it cannot cope with spiritual reality. He explained that,

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and no human mind has conceived (1 Cor 2:9).

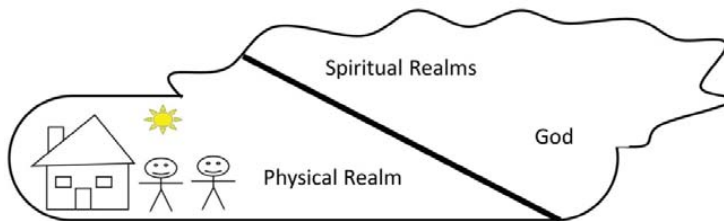
We need spiritual insight to understand what is happening in the spiritual dimension. That is why Paul prayed that the "eyes our hearts may be enlightened" (Eph 1:18).

Seeing Changed

Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve could see into the spiritual world. They were able to walk with God in the cool of the evenings and speak directly to him. They were able to see the devil, when he came to tempt them. His activity in the spiritual dimensions, made him appear snakelike from a physical perspective.



This situation did not last long. When Adam and Eve sinned, their sight was changed so that they could no longer see into the spiritual realms.



The Bible says their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked (Gen 3:7). This statement is a huge irony. Their eyes were actually closed to the spiritual realms. When they could see the brilliant glory of the heavenly realms, their observation of the physical world was dimmed, and they did not notice they were naked. Once the light of heavenly glory was turned off, their view of the physical world was greatly intensified, so they realized for the first time that they were naked.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus gained a spiritual body, which enabled him to interact more freely with the spiritual world. After death, those who believe in Jesus will be given new spiritual bodies. This will enable us to interact with the spiritual dimensions in the same way that Adam and Eve did before the fall. We will be able to see the glory of the total universe that God created. We will be blown by the glory of the spiritual realms and the wonder of the physical world will be diminished.

Authority

Authority is the ability to give a command and be certain that it will be carried out. Originally, God has absolute authority in the spiritual realms. The angels all do his bidding instantly.

Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word (Psalm 103:19-21).

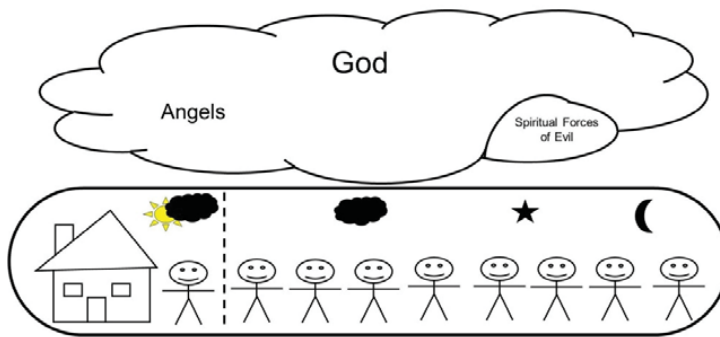
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All the angels accepted the authority of God and followed the directions of his Spirit.

At some point, a third of the angels rebelled against God's authority. We do not know if this was before, or after, humans were created. Satan set up an alternative kingdom, under some semblance of his authority. I presume these angels grew tired of being subservient to God and wanted independent authority for themselves.

God created the earth and placed humans in it. He gave authority over the earth to the people he created, but kept authority in heaven for himself (Gen 1:26).

Satan wrested authority from Adam and Eve by persuading them to believe a lie. This gave his spiritual forces of wickedness a place in heaven and authority over the earth, but it was stolen authority. The devil also wheedled a place in the spiritual realms by acting as accuser /prosecutor of God's people before the presence of God (Job 1:6, Rev 12:10).



Sin and the fall destroyed the unity that had existed in the spiritual realms. God still dominates the spiritual realms, and two thirds of the angels remained loyal to him. However, Satan drew together the angels that had rebelled with him and squeezed them into an alternative power structure in one corner of the spiritual world.

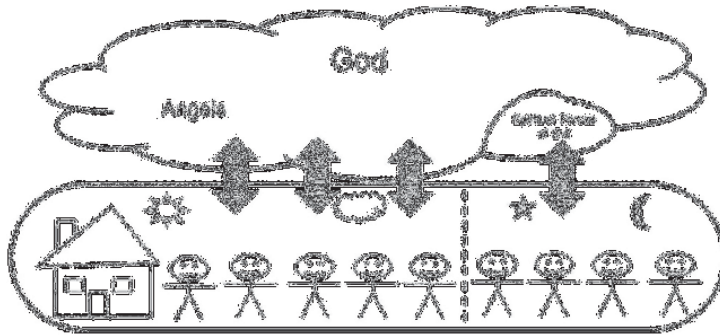
Division in the spiritual realms extenuated the division on earth. The struggle between the Kingdom of God and the world became more intense. In places where the spiritual forces of evil gained control, darkness prevailed.

The spiritual forces of wickedness are not all viciously evil. A few have a real passion for evil, but most a just looking for opportunities to promote their own power and position. Many of them are deceivers and others specialise in producing anger or fear. Sometimes they actively do nasty stuff to good people, but most of the time the just produce chaos and disorder. There will be time when evil gets a hold in the world by working through an evil dictator like Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin. Mostly the effect of the fall is chaos and shambles. This contrasts with the peach and wisdom of the Kingdom of God.

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Interactions

Interaction between the spiritual sphere and the physical world are critical to the operation of authority in both spheres. These interactions go both ways. (The picture describes a situation where the influence of the kingdom has increased beyond the dark days of the fall.)



The angels live in the spiritual dimensions, but have the ability to move between the spiritual and physical worlds. The spiritual forces of evil are fallen angels with the same ability to move between the spiritual and physical dimensions. They operate in the spiritual realm, but they can cross over into the physical realm to work evil.

Angels and evil spirits can touch our physical world in only once place at one time. This limits what they can do on earth. In contrast, the Holy Spirit is present everywhere on earth at any time. This gives him unlimited power and makes him far greater than any angel and much greater reach than the devil.

1. Spiritual to Physical

The battle in the spiritual sphere has a strong influence on events on earth. Paul explained this in his letter to the Ephesians.

Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:11-12).

Paul reminds us that when we are dealing with people and events on earth, they are being manipulated by spiritual forces that we cannot see.

The spiritual powers of evil are attracted to authority and people with authority. If they can influence a person with authority, they can amplify their power on earth. When Daniel was praying about the situation of the exiles in Persia, God revealed that the power driving the situation was a spiritual being called the Prince of Persia.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia (Dan 10:13).

The spiritual power had to be defeated in the spiritual realms, before the situation would change in Persia.

Changes in government, whether by military coup or election, often change nothing. The reason is that nothing has changed in the spiritual realms.

Influences from the spiritual realms explain why economic crises occur, when economist's thing the situation is improving.

Spiritual influences explain why war breaks out when peace looks permanent, as in 1914.

2. Physical to Spiritual

Interactions between earth and heaven flow both ways. Events in earth often cause changes in the spiritual realms.

Daniels prayers released the archangel Michael to constrain the spiritual being called the Prince of Persia (Dan 10:13). This enabled the other angel to speak to Daniel on Earth. This changed the situation for the exiles in Persia and they eventually returned to the Promised Land.

Angels and evil spirits do not have unlimited authority to move on the earth. God has given authority over the earth to humans (Gen 1:26), so they can only get involved if humans with the relevant authority give them permission (and evil spirits will cheat when they can). This means that beings in the spiritual realms are constrained by people on earth.

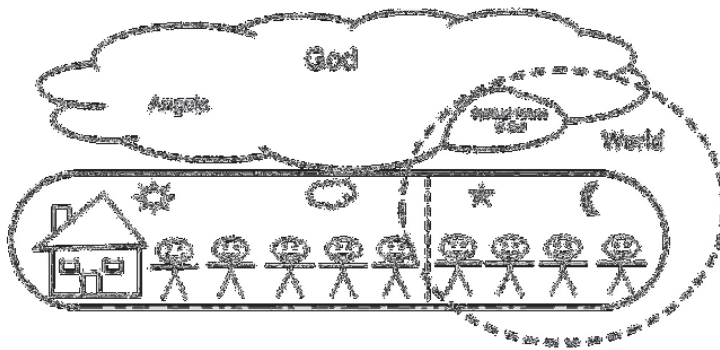
I explain how people on earth influence events in the spiritual realms in Prayer and Authority.

Authority Struggle

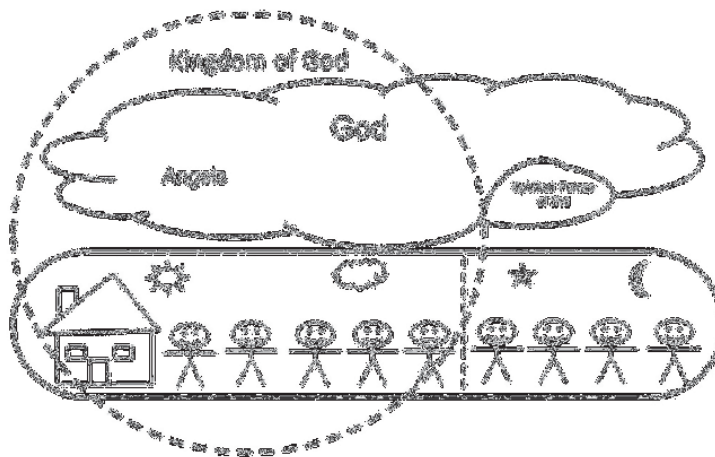
John challenged Christians to avoid becoming entangled in the world.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them (1 John 2:15).

The Greek word for "world" is kosmos. It is not just the physical world. John used this word to describe the world system. It describes a system that is controlled by the devil and his forces of evil and the people and things under their influence.



The Kingdom of God is everyone and everything that freely submits to God's will, whether in the spiritual and physical realms.



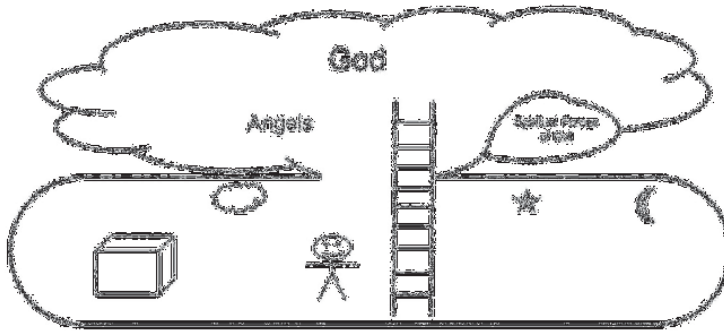
History of Interaction between the Realms

The Bible tells the story of interactions between the physical and spiritual realms. During Old Testament times, the interactions were infrequent, because God did not have authority to get actively involved in the world. Following the cross and Pentecost the interaction between the spiritual and physical realms increased significantly.

Jacob

Jacob was given a clear view of this interaction at the place he called Bethel (house of God).

He had a dream in which he saw a stairway ¹⁰⁴resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD (Gen 28:12).



In his dream, Jacob saw a stairway between the spiritual realms and the physical realms. God was in the spiritual realm at the top. Jacob was in the physical world at the bottom. They seemed to be really close. The angels were travelling between the spiritual realms with God towards the physical world. They were not able to go out into the physical world, because no one had given them authority to act on earth. That is why they turned and went back up the stairway again.

Jacob did not fully understand what he saw. He assumed that heaven and earth were only close at this place, so he set up a stone pillar, so he could find it again. He promised to give a tenth of what he received to God (Gen 28:22). God did not need his wealth. He wanted him to understand that the spiritual realms are close all over the earth, wherever people seek God with open hearts. God wanted Jacob to pray, so his angels would have authority to go to work on earth.

Moses

Moses gained a glimpse into the spiritual realms, before God called him into his ministry.

There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" (Ex 3:2,4).

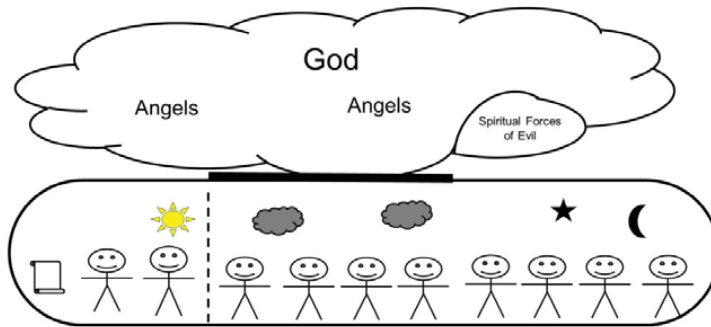
The Burning Bush was not a miraculous sign to dazzle Moses. God wanted Moses to understand that the spiritual realms were close to the world of a lonely shepherd. God was able to speak to Moses from the bush, because the spiritual realms touch the physical world. Learning this truth enabled Moses to hear God speak wherever he went. Hearing God's voice was critical for his ministry. This why he was a great prophet (Deut 34:10).

When Moses led the children out of Israel out of Egypt, God travelled in front in a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night (Ex 40:36). He led Moses and his people to Mount Sinai.

Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire.

The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently (Ex 19:17-18).

The people saw this intervention of the spiritual realms into the physical world. God came close and gave Moses the law. Before they moved into the promised land, god wanted the people to understand that the spiritual realm was close, wherever they went.



When Moses and the people had built the tabernacle, it became a place of connection between the spiritual realms and the physical realms.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35).

The tabernacle was a place where the people of God could go to interact with the spiritual realms.

Job

The book of Job is really important, because it explains why evil occurs on earth. Innocent people often suffer, because the devil has a go at them to prove a point in heaven. When Satan left the presence of God to work his evil on earth:

- Fire came down from heavens and destroyed his flocks of sheep.
- The Sabeans attacked and stole all his oxen and donkeys.
- The Chaldeans attacked and carried off all his camels.
- A wind blew from the dessert and destroyed the house of his youngest son. His children, who were in the house, were also killed.

These events seemed to be natural disasters, so insurance companies would call them Acts of God. However, we know from Job 1 that they were the works of the evil one and his spiritual forces. When Job continued to honour God, the devil decided on a second attack. He afflicted Job with boils. A doctor would say that Job had caught an infection, because he was run down by his grief, but we know something different was going on. The sickness was a direct attack from the spiritual realms by an angry devil.

Prophets

The prophets are often perceived to be people who could predict the future, but this is a distortion of their true role. The prophets were called to act as intermediaries between the spiritual and physical worlds for people who could not see. Jeremiah said that prophets see in the spiritual realms and convey to the people what they are seeing.

But if they had stood in my council,
they would have proclaimed my words to my people
and would have turned them from their evil ways
and from their evil deeds (Jer 33:22).

The false prophets spoke for their own minds. The prophets could see into the spiritual realms and they explained to the people what they saw.

Ezekiel had an amazing vision at the beginning of his ministry. He saw wheels moving in unison.

When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels (Ez 1:19-20).

Ezekiel did not have an encounter with a UFO of a piece of modern art. God opened his eyes to see into the spiritual realms. What he saw was so amazing, that he struggled to describe what he saw. He used words like jewels and spinning wheels to give his listeners and understanding of what he saw, but these words mostly failed him.

Isaiah's ministry began when he saw into the heavenly realms in a vision.

I saw the Lord, high and exalted seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were angels, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying (Is 6:1-2).

Understanding that the spiritual realm ran parallel to earth assisted Isaiah to function in his ministry as a prophet.

When their city was surrounded by an army of horses and chariots, Elisha opened the eyes of his servant so he could see what was happening in the spiritual realms.

Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:17).

The servant only saw the horse and chariots of the enemy army. He needed his eyes opened to see the huge army in the spiritual realms that was ready to support and protect Elisha. They blinded the army, so he could humiliate them by leading them into the centre of the city (2 Kings 18-23).

When Ahab and Jehoshaphat were planning to go to war against Syria, Miciah saw what was happening in the spiritual realms.

I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, "Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there" ... A spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, "I will entice him... I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets" "You will succeed in enticing him," said the LORD. "Go and do it" (1 King 22:19-22).

The false prophets believed that Ahab would win the war. Miciah had spiritual insight, so he realised that Ahab would die. He saw what was going on in the spiritual realms and knew that Ahab was in trouble.

When Elijah was on Mount Carmel, his prophesying released an intervention from the spiritual realms.

Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench (1 Kings 18:38).

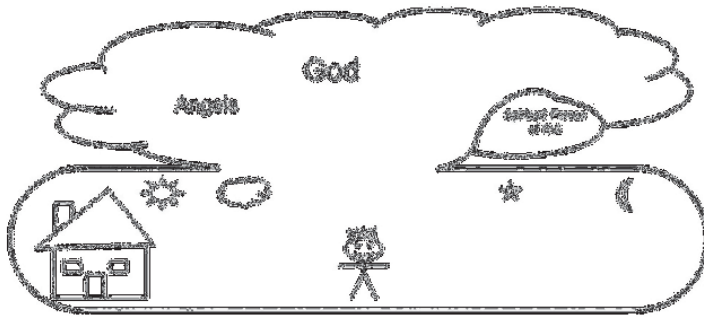
The power to destroy the wood and the altar came from the heavenly realms. When Elijah fled to the cave on Mount Horeb, another intervention occurred.

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by" (1 Kings 19:11).

Elijah went outside the cave and saw a great gale, followed by a fire, followed by a gentle whisper. He knew that God was not a fire or a wind, but understood that he had seen into the spiritual realms. God spoke to him and gave him instructions for the remainder of his ministry.

Jesus

When Jesus came to earth, he was constrained as a man to operating in the physical world. However, he had not fallen into sin, so he still had access to the spiritual realms while on earth (he is the one wearing a crown in the picture.)



- His baptism was an encounter with the spiritual realms. People watching saw a dove descending on Jesus. It was not a real dove, but an intrusion of the Holy Spirit from the spiritual realms. This was confirmed by the voice speaking from there (Matt 3:16-17).
- Jesus temptation was a different kind of encounter with the spiritual realms. The devil spoke to and tried to divert him from obedience to the Father. This was an amazing contest that ended differently from the original encounter with Adam and Eve. It resulted in the devil leaving and the angels caring for Jesus (Matt 3:11).
- Jesus regularly drew aside to commune with the father.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed (Mark 1:35).

He needed frequent interaction with the spiritual realms.

- Jesus ministry always originated in heaven. He only did what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19).

The Father loves the Son and shows him all he does (John 5:20).

He knew what to do because he could see into the spiritual realms.

- Jesus did not respond to what people said and did, but what he saw in the spiritual realms. He was able to tell Nathaniel what he had been doing.

I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you (John 1:48).

- A different kind of spiritual interaction occurred when Jesus was crossing the lake in a boat. When they were in the middle of the lake, a terrible storm struck. This was not an ordinary. Mark describes it as a "great storm of wind" (Mark 4:37). Matthew says a great shaking (seismos) occurred in the sea. (Matt 8:24). The men in the boat were experienced sailors, but they were filled with terror, because they realised they could be destroyed.

This was not just another storm. Most storms are caused by strong wind. This was caused by something stirring the sea. The forces of darkness understood that Jesus was a risk to them. Now he had started his ministry the risk was becoming clear. He was casting out demons, and they were powerless. He was healing the people they had inflicted with sickness. They knew that they had to deal with him, before he really got going. So they stirred up the sea and the wind in an effort to kill Jesus.

When the disciples woke Jesus, he understood what was happening. He rebuked wind in the same way as he rebuked evil spirits that he was casting out. He spoke to the said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still" (Mark 4:39)! Speaking to an "act of nature" is a pointless waste of time, but Jesus knew the storm was demonic. He seemed to be speaking to the wind and the waves, but he was actually speaking to the evil spirits who were at work in both.

The disciples just saw a storm. Jesus realised that in the spiritual realms, a host of evil spirits had stirred up the wind and the sea in an effort to destroy him. There were other boats on the Sea of Galilee that night (Mk 4:36), but the spirits focussed the attack on his boat. Jesus understood his authority, so he rebuked the evil spirits. I presume that when he spoke, a host of powerful angels forced the evil spirits off the lake. That is why the wind and the waves instantly calmed.

Unlike a natural storm, this storm came without warning and ended suddenly. Much is made of the unpredictability of storms on the Galilee, but Jesus disciples knew how to read the weather signs (Luke 12:54) and would not have gone out if a storm was brewing. This storm ended as quickly as it started, because its source was demonic.

- At the Transfiguration, Jesus took Peter and John into the spiritual realms.

Moses and Elijah appeared before them, talking with Jesus (Matt 17:3).

It appeared to them that Moses and Elijah had come down to earth. The reality was that Jesus parted the curtain between physical and the spiritual realms, so could see where these men were living with God.

- Jesus had come from the spiritual realms, so he was familiar with their operation. He knew he could call for a spiritual intention into events whenever he chose.

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels (Matt 26:53).

Jesus knew the spiritual powers could overwhelm the greatest power political empire on earth.

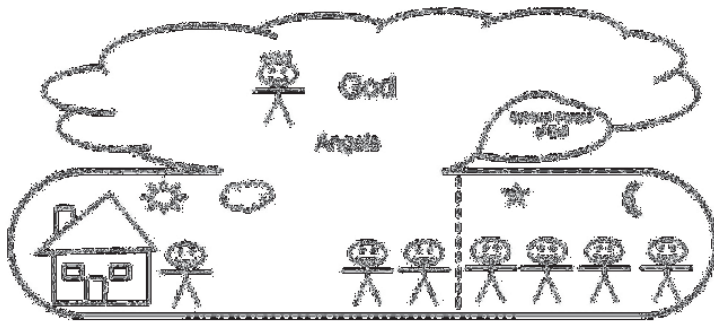
- When Jesus was on the cross carrying the weight of human sin, he was totally separated from good side of the spiritual realms. The evil forces in the spiritual realms were able to torment him. This was the source of his desolation.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matt 27:46).

Jesus' pain demonstrates the importance of understanding the spiritual realms.

Ascension

At the ascension, Jesus appeared to go up into the air and behind a cloud, but he was really moving back into the spiritual realms from which he had come



Because the eyes of the disciples were calibrated to seeing the physical world, he seemed to go into the sky and disappear. If they could have seen with spiritual eyes, they would have realised that he had simply moved across the divide into the spiritual realms.

Pentecost

Sin closed the spiritual realms off from human sight. Jesus death and resurrection dealt with the problem of sin. His ascension opened up the spiritual realms for those who trust in him. Jesus followers perceived by faith what he had seen naturally. The Day of Pentecost was a massive intervention from the spiritual realms.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:1-4).

The spiritual realms opened up and observers¹¹¹ heard and saw a violent wind and fire. The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, which gave them continuous access to the spiritual realms. They were equipped to speak languages that could be understood in the spiritual realms, but not by people on earth.

Spiritual gifts are an intervention from the spiritual realms into the physical world.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be ignorant... There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines (1 Cor 12:1,4-6,11).

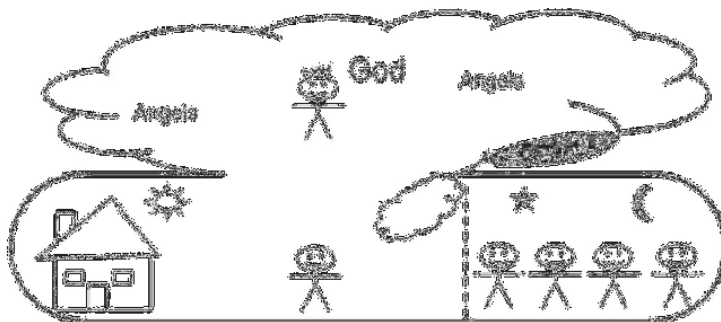
Paul said we should be informed about "spiritual gifts". However, the word gift is missing from the original text. A more precise translation would say, "I want you to know about the spirituals". Paul wants us to know about the spiritual realms, so we can facilitate intervention from there into the spiritual world by exercising them.

When I speak in tongues, I am speaking a language from the spiritual realms that other humans cannot understand. Receiving a word of knowledge is hearing words being spoken in the spiritual realms. I hear them because I am walking in the Spirit and he enables me to hear what is being said in the "room" next door. The people who are stuck in this room need me to tell them what is being spoken on the other side of the wall. A word of wisdom is insight received from the spiritual realms. These spiritual gifts support our interaction with the spiritual realms.

Early Church

Stephen was filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:5), so when he was about to be stoned, he described what he could see in the spiritual realms.

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:54-56).



The Jewish leaders saw a man preaching. Stephen saw Jesus seated at the right hand of God. That was the reality that was shaping events on earth.

When Peter was in prison, he was released by a spiritual intervention.

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists (Acts 12:7).

King Herod had locked Peter up. Something different was happening in the spiritual realms, so he was set free.

Unveiling

When John's life was drawing to a close, he was given a unique ability to see into the spiritual realms.

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it"... I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me (Rev 1:10-12).

He did not have the words to describe what he saw, so he took words like emerald, crystal, rainbow, glass, sea, thunder, gold, lampstand, snow, that describe some of the most amazing things in this world, and jumbled them up to describe what he saw in spiritual realms. We should not assume these are literal descriptions. John was doing his best with words designed for describing a three-dimensional world, but he was actually describing the indescribable.

The Greek word translated "revelation" is "apokalupsis" (Rev 1:1). . It means unveiling or uncovering. Our focus on the physical dimensions of life hides the spiritual dimensions and gives us a false view of reality. The spiritual world was unveiled for John and he got a glimpse of reality as the angels see it. Jesus gave him this revelation to show that our view of reality is only half the truth.

The world assumes that a visionary person sees something that is half-real. The truth is opposite. The physical world that we see with our human eyes is only half of reality. The spiritual world unveiled to John in his vision is the other half that we usually miss. John struggled to grasp all that his prophetic eyes saw, but he carefully recorded everything for the benefit of those coming after him. The main purpose of the book of Revelation is to increase our awareness of the spiritual realms. To get a true perspective on reality, we must see things in heaven and things on earth together. Revelation gives us the other side of reality.

John gained a massive insight into what was happening in the spiritual realms, but he found it difficult to do justice to the beauty of the spiritual glory.

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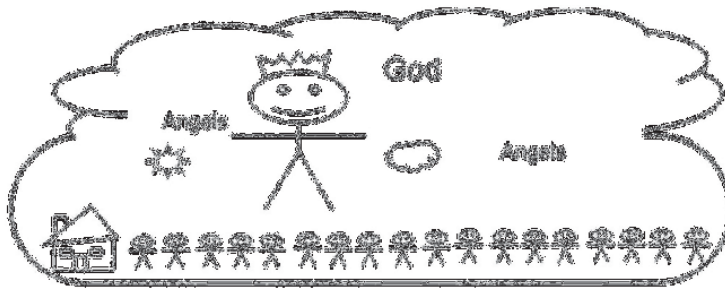
Parousia

When Jesus returns at the end of the age, the gap between the spiritual world and the physical world will be completely removed and everyone will be able to see into the spiritual realms.

The appearance of Jesus will be a massive interjection of the spiritual dimension into our physical world.

Jesus return will bring a change of seeing. The spiritual realms that are currently hidden from the people on earth will be opened up for everyone to see. Paul wrote of the "manifestation of Jesus' appearance" (2 Thes 2:8). He was explaining that the spiritual dimensions will open and be visible to everyone on earth.

The limits of our human seeing make the physical world appear bright and real. The spiritual dimension seems distant and dim to us, as it must be perceived by faith. When our seeing is changed, the physical world will fade into obscurity. As the spiritual world comes into clearer focus, we will be stunned by its glory. Jesus does not come back to earth. He appears when the spiritual world is opened and joined with the physical world for everyone to see.



When our spiritual eyes are opened to see clearly, the spiritual dimensions of life will suddenly be real. When the curtain is pulled back, the indescribable glory of Jesus will be revealed. Once they can see reality clearly, everyone on earth will see Jesus seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father. He has always been there, but from a human perspective, he will seem to have appeared.

The appearance of the earth and sky will be totally changed. With the physical and spiritual dimensions merged, earth will seem much less grand. Physical things will not have changed, but we will be seeing them in correct perspective for the first time. We think that space is immense, but when we see the spiritual realms, it will suddenly seem small. As we see the glory of the spiritual realms for the first time, Jesus will be revealed, while earth and space shrink away.

Interaction Now

To do God's will on earth, we must understand what is being done in heaven. We do not need to indulge in occult practices to get this understanding. That would place us in bondage. We learn about events in the spiritual realms by listening to the Holy Spirit. He sees and hears everything spoken in the spiritual realms.

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. All that belongs to the Father is mine... The Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you (John 16:13,15).

The Spirit knows everything that is happening in the spiritual realms. An important part of his role is telling us what Jesus and the Father are saying and doing. Jesus promised that he would reveal it Gods will to us. Once we know his will, we can declare it and pray it into being.

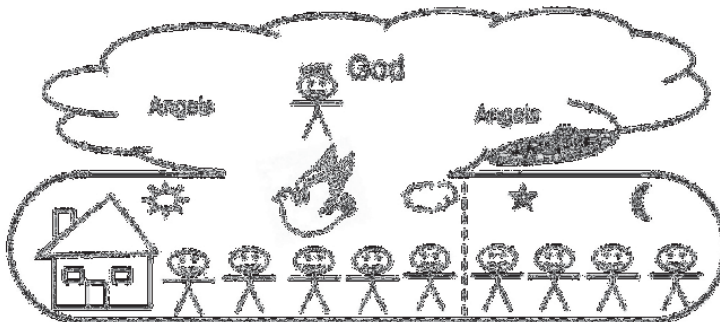
Hearing the truth proclaimed in the spiritual realms is essential. For God's will to be done on earth, he needs humans living on the earth to give him authority to do his will here. Paul explains how the Holy Spirit teaches us God's will.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us (1 Cor 2:10-13).

God declares his will in the spiritual realms. If we listen to his Spirit, he will tell us all that we need to know. The next verse is a key.

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words (1 Cor 2:13).

This verse is important. Human wisdom misses half of what is happening in this universe. True wisdom results from being taught by the Spirit. He explains spiritual realities to us in Spirit-taught words.



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The Holy Spirit speaks, and tells us what God is saying (John 14:25). He also shows what is happening in the spiritual realms (John 16:14).

People who reject the Holy Spirit's calling cannot understand the importance of the spiritual realms.

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14).

They cannot be seen through human eyes. This is why the rulers of the world are blind to what is really happening.

None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8).

Herod and Pilate thought they were getting rid of a minor political nuisance. In fact, they were bringing about a massive victory in the spiritual realms that would change the direction of history. They were releasing the Kingdom of God, which would sweep away their kingdoms and continue forever.

Pauls concludes this bit of teaching by saying that we have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). That does not mean that we are theological educated, or even that we understand the truth. We have the mind of the spiritually anointed one, if we can understand the interaction between the spiritual and the physical realms. We receive this understanding by listening to the voice of the Spirit.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul explained why this is important.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:1-3).

We are easily distracted by things that happen in the world. That is mistake. We have been raised up with Jesus, so we should fix our hearts on the things that are happening in the spiritual realms. Paul goes on to explain why.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Col 3:4).

When Jesus appears, what we have established in the spiritual realms will be revealed. The houses and businesses that we have built on earth will wither into insignificance.

Kingdom Come

When Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray, he taught them how to pray in the Kingdom of God.

Your will be done in the earthly realms, as it is done in the spiritual realms (Matt 6:10).

In the spiritual realms, the angels rush to do the Father's will (Ps 103:20). The kingdom comes on earth when people rush to do his bidding in the same way as the angel in the spiritual realms. When the Holy Spirit prompts and people follow his guidance, the kingdom will come.

Paul said the same thing in a different way when he explained that God's goal for history is for there to be unity between the spiritual and physical realms.

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment-to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (Eph 1:9-10).

When the times are fulfilled, things in both the spiritual and the physical realms will come into unity by being submitted to Jesus. His kingdom will have come when all authority in heaven and on earth has been brought back under him.

I often hear Christians say that they are going to change, because God has released angel of victory, or has opened the windows of heaven. Yet nothing really changes. These voices are confused, because they do not understand that God does not have a free hand to do what he likes on earth. He has given authority on earth to humans. He has provided everything we need through the cross and the Spirit. He needs humans with authority to release him to deliver what Jesus established.

I explain some of the Big Authority Shifts in the Gods Big Strategy. I will show how these authority shifts came about through interactions between the spiritual and physical realms.

The kingdom of God is the sphere of God's rule and authority. God is the creator of the whole universe. However, among His creation, an angelic being, called Satan, rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven together with other angels who followed him. These have certain influences in many places and they are hostile to God and His followers.

In Luke 11:14-26 and Luke 17:20-21, we learn that there are two kingdoms in the spiritual realm:

- The Kingdom of God, representing light, truth and goodness.
- The kingdom of Satan, representing the powers of darkness, lies and evil.

These kingdoms are at war with each other all the time. Every person is in one or the other of these kingdoms. However, it is God's purpose to rescue us from Satan's power and to place us into His Kingdom, 1 Peter 2:9. Jesus broke the power of Satan when he died on the cross and rose again. Now

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Satan is a defeated enemy.

People come under a new authority when they respond to this evidence of God's power through His Son, Jesus. They are rescued from the bondage of Satan and are transferred to the Kingdom of God.

The ‘strong man’, in Luke 11:21, is Satan in control of a person. But Jesus is the ‘stronger man’ who can rescue the person from Satan’s control. Jesus is victor over Satan.

5. FOUR KINDS OF SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN TEACHING

There are four kinds of spirit according to the Bible. These are:

- **The Holy Spirit of God**

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, whom God sent to this earth after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4. He is not a force or a power of God, but is one of the Persons in the Trinity. He has personal attributes, such as being able to be grieved or angered. He also speaks. He indwells every true believer who repents and seeks forgiveness through Jesus Christ, Acts 2:38-39.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. The Bible teaches that He is active in our lives, a distinct person, and fully God.

Keywords: testimony, God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, person, Trinity, emotions, fellowship, indwelling, born of God

My brother Dave was the area supervisor of several gas stations. Every day he visited each of his stores. One morning he left early and started for the farthest store on his route. Dave was feeling depressed, and with no one in the car with him, he had few distractions from his feelings. The emptiness of his life troubled him. The road trip was getting miserable.

Then suddenly, Dave said he heard a voice, an audible voice! Someone in that car said, “Jesus loves you!” In shock, my brother turned to his right. He saw no one. Who was that? Was it God? “Forgive me!” Dave cried out. Then something happened in his heart. God gave him the assurance right then that he was a new creature in Christ.

Discovering that he no longer wanted the cigarettes in his front pocket, Dave threw them onto the car floor to be thrown away when he reached his destination. When he got home that night, he poured out the alcohol from the bar in his basement. He gathered his family around the dining room table and told them that things would be different in their home. And they were. That was over twenty years ago, and my brother is still a strong Christian.

Now my question is: who spoke to my brother going down the highway? Was it an angel? Was it Jesus? Was it Dave’s imagination? I believe the voice Dave heard that morning was the voice of the Holy Spirit. Why does He speak? He speaks (though usually not audibly) because He is a Person, because He is God, and because His work is to bring each of us into a delightful, personal relationship with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit Is a Person

The Holy Spirit can speak (Acts 8:29, 11:12, 13:2)—though some people don't think the Holy Spirit can speak because they think of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force, or simply a presence. For instance, a Jehovah's Witness might say something like this:

"The holy spirit is not a person and it is not a part of a Trinity. The holy spirit is God's active force that he uses to accomplish his will. . . . To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity."¹

The Jehovah's Witness sees the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force. Maybe you, too, have trouble thinking of the Holy Spirit as a real person. After all, He doesn't have a physical body like Jesus does. But He is a person who has eternally lived in an intimate relationship with God the Father and God the Son. And now He invites each of us to participate in that dynamic relationship of love.

Biblical Proof that the Holy Spirit is a Person

A real person has the attributes of personality, which include mind, will, and emotions. Does the Holy Spirit have a will? He distributes spiritual gifts to Christians "as He wills."² Does the Holy Spirit have a mind? He "searches . . . the deep things of God" and knows them.³ Does the Holy Spirit have emotions? We are told to "grieve not the Holy Spirit."⁴ If the Holy Spirit can be grieved, then He has emotions. Because the Holy Spirit has a mind, a will, and emotions, we know that He is a Person.⁵

A real person also has the capacity to have relationships with others. That's the primary reason we have mind, will, and emotions. According to Philippians 2:1, the Spirit is able to have fellowship with us.⁶ According to 2 Corinthians 13:14, the Holy Spirit can have communion with us.⁷ One who is able to commune and to have fellowship is capable of personal relationships. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a person.

What This Means For You

Understand that the Holy Spirit is a real Person, not just a force or a presence or a power. You must recognize Him as a Person. He can speak.⁸ He is praying for you, just as Christ is praying for you.⁹ He will teach you what you need to know. He will guide you in your decisions. He tells you that you are a child of God.¹⁰ He will personally clean up the "rooms" of your innermost being when you let Him. You can submit to His voice or reject His voice. If you disobey His voice, He will be grieved. Respecting the Holy Spirit as a person is necessary for your relationship with Him.

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Listening to the Spirit

Take time to listen for the Spirit. Don't wait for an audible voice—He rarely speaks audibly—but listen as He speaks through the Word. Learn to understand what many call "the

prompts” and “the checks” of the Spirit. You can experience these because the Spirit, as a divine Person, has taken a personal interest in you. Have you ever thanked Him for that?

The Holy Spirit Is God

The Holy Spirit is the all-knowing, all-seeing, everywhere-present God. Acts 5:3–4 teaches us that the Holy Spirit is God. Remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira? Before Ananias was struck dead, Peter told him, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . You have not lied to men; but to God.” From this event we can see that lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God; therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.

There is more Scriptural evidence that the Holy Spirit is God. We see from the Bible that:

- The words of God are the words the Holy Spirit inspired.¹¹
- We are the temple of God because the Spirit indwells us.¹²
- The one born of the Spirit is said to be born of God.¹³

The Holy Spirit is God Himself, the third Person of the divine Trinity. Why is it so important to believe in the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit? It is crucial because you cannot give Him the honor and respect that He deserves if you don’t consider Him a divine Person. In fact, I find it doubtful that someone can be saved while he denies the personhood and deity of the One who tries to draw him to salvation.¹⁴

The Holy Spirit Is Distinct from the Father and the Son

One person I talked to declared, “The Holy Spirit is Jesus.” Some people think that the Holy Spirit is actually the same Person as the Father and the Son. But the Scriptures clearly teach a distinction between the Persons of the Trinity. For example, again and again in John 14–16, Jesus referred to a Helper (“Comforter” in the KJV) that He would send when He went back to the Father.¹⁵ This Helper would guide the disciples and teach them.¹⁶ If Jesus and the Holy Spirit were one and the same Person, Jesus’s reference to the Holy Spirit as another Helper would not make sense. Jesus must have been referring to another Person distinct from Himself.

Look at the account of Jesus’s baptism.¹⁷ Here the Son is baptized; a voice from Heaven says, “This is my beloved Son”; and the Holy Spirit, like a dove, rests upon Jesus. All of this occurs simultaneously. All three of the members of the Trinity are seen here at the same time, obviously distinct from one another.

As a distinct person, the Holy Spirit has lived in a loving relationship with the Father and Son from all eternity. God created us to participate in that love relationship. God wants us to enjoy fellowship with Him,¹⁸ as each member of the Trinity has enjoyed fellowship with each other from before the beginning of time.¹⁹

The Spirit Is at Work in the World and in Your Heart Today

The Holy Spirit speaks to us because He is the third Person of the Trinity, sent by the Father and the Son to work in our hearts.²⁰ The Holy Spirit was active in creation.²¹ He inspired the Holy Scriptures.²² So, what does He do today? He convicts the world of sin.²³ He regenerates the repentant believer²⁴ and gives assurance to those of us who are saved.²⁵ He sanctifies us.²⁶ He fills us with His presence.²⁷ He gives us power to live holy lives²⁸ and to be witnesses for God.²⁹ He helps us understand the Bible.³⁰ He enables us to exhibit the “fruit of the Spirit.”³¹ He gives gifts to each member of the church so that each of us in the “body” can contribute as the Spirit desires.³² He “seals” us for the day of redemption, guaranteeing our inheritance in heaven.³³

Personal Application

Are you allowing God the Holy Spirit to work in your life? Are you letting Him sanctify you? Has He given you power to be an effective witness? Are you manifesting the “fruit of the Spirit?” Have you discovered the spiritual gifts that the Spirit has given you? Are you letting Him use you in the body of Christ?

The Holy Spirit wants to take up personal residence inside us. We can have a joyful life filled with the presence of the Spirit. We should listen carefully for the Spirit, for He loves to encourage and empower those who are willing to obey His voice as they study Scripture.

Nothing in the world is like the Holy Spirit. Any child of God without the baptism of the Holy Spirit is living far beneath his or her privilege, missing out daily on many great benefits from Heaven. If you don't have Him, let me encourage you to tarry before the Lord until you receive this wonderful baptism.

Jesus, our example, received the Holy Ghost; John the Baptist was a witness to it: And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him (Matthew 3:16). Jesus did not begin His Earth ministry until He was baptized in the Holy Ghost. Every preacher, every worker should be baptized in the Holy Ghost as well. The Holy Ghost is our teacher, our guide; we need to be taught by Him so we can teach others. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, leading us into all truth.

God didn't mean for people to only have a Calvary but also a Pentecost. God proved that when He came down on Mt. Sinai with the fire of the Holy Ghost and set the mountain ablaze with His Spirit. The pillar of fire and the burning bush represent that great Holy Ghost who was working in and through Moses. The power of the Holy Ghost was the reason Moses had so many miracles and healings; all nine gifts of the Spirit worked in Moses' life. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, Moses was able to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and through the same power of the Holy Ghost the Bride will be taken from the earth when Jesus comes again.

Jesus Sent the Comforter

We're in the final hour, the most exciting time in Church history. Every child of God should be deep in Calvary's blood and on fire with the Holy Ghost. Teaching us the blood, the Holy Ghost quickens our spirits, enlivens us, gives us life until, as we yield, we are living through the blood.

I've been to man's school, studied under some great professors, but the greatest professor of all is the Holy Spirit. Spending thousands of hours with me, He is ever teaching and I'm ever learning, ever coming into the knowledge of the truth. He guides us in prayer, makes intercession to the Father for us.

The disciples depended heavily on Jesus when He was here, but He told them, Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:7,13).

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit Was Foretold

Joel prophesied about the great pouring-out of the Holy Spirit that would take place in our day. Joel 2:28, And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. The Early Church received the early rain of the Holy Spirit, but this latter rain will be even greater. Today we are seeing the greater pouring-out everywhere. Some won't accept it; even many churches and ministries refuse the power of the Holy Ghost, but we welcome it.

The Holy Ghost is the reason the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate, the reason we have signs, wonders, miracles and healings in our services. Because of the power of the Holy Ghost, people travel from all over the world to get here.

Peter Came Back

For forty days after Jesus had risen from the tomb, He was with Peter and the others. Peter was the one who had backslidden, but Jesus forgave him and he was there in the Upper Room along with the mother of Jesus and others to be baptized in the Holy Ghost. Now, with the fire of the Holy Ghost burning in his soul, Peter was standing up before a crowd and preaching Jesus. Thank God he had come back! Filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter became one of the strongest of the apostles. He didn't let his failure destroy him. More determined than ever, he took his stand for Jesus in a great way.

Respond to the Right Drawing Power

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How sad that so many today don't feel the need for the Holy Ghost! That means they are not born again of the Spirit of God the way they ought to be. I contend that when people make it to Calvary, they will want to go on to the Upper Room to respond to that drawing power that gives them a deeper walk with the Lord. The divine blood that washes away your sins gives

you the great call to the Upper Room, gives you an appetite, a thirst and hunger for more of the Lord. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6).

Some people say they tried to receive the Holy Ghost, but the Lord didn't baptize them. What they imply is that they were ready, but the Holy Spirit wasn't, that some day when the Lord gets ready to baptize them He will. I have news for them: He's been ready to baptize them the way He was ready to save them long before they gave their heart to Him. If you have been born again and not received the Holy Ghost, it isn't because He wasn't ready. He was ready to baptize you long ago, but you haven't really yielded to Him; you haven't given over to His power.

The Holy Ghost comes into a holy temple; for the Holy Ghost to live in you, the temple must be holy, the tongue pure because He will use the tongue when He comes in.

Robbed of the Image

What does God think about the Holy Spirit? He thinks He is a partner, a helper. The Holy Spirit helped create man. It was the Godhead who made man. When God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Genesis 1:26), He was talking to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, not to the angels who were made a little higher than we. By the Godhead, man and woman were created in the image of God. Unfortunately, the day came when man let the devil rob him of that image. No longer did man look to or live in righteousness and holiness like the Godhead.

A New and Living Way

Many, many years after the Garden of Eden, the second Adam, the very Son of God, came to Earth to restore what the devil had stolen. The first Adam had failed us, and we needed a second Adam to come to make sons and daughters for God.

God wanted sons and daughters. He said, I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Corinthians 6:18). So Jesus came with the holy, divine blood that made it possible for people to be made new, to become those sons and daughters of God that He wanted. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17).

Too many people think salvation is nothing more than joining a church and being baptized in water. Although they haven't received a true born-again experience, still they assume they are going to Heaven at the end of their journey. How distraught they will be when they find they have missed Heaven by millions of miles. At their funeral the preacher will say they are in Heaven, but they won't be there. To reach Heaven they had to have been born new.

Jesus is the way; He brought a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Hebrews 10:20). It's a holy way He brought. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). When you take on the holiness and righteousness of God, you're ready to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Are You a Friend of the World?

We live in a pouring–out time, I say again. For hundreds and hundreds of years the Holy Ghost hadn't been poured out in a full measure like it had in the first thirty–three years of the Early Church. When the Church began to go the way of the world, it lost that incredible power. You can't be a friend to the world and still be a friend to God. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (I John 2:15).

In the seventeenth chapter of John, we find Jesus praying to the Father about His followers. He said, They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:16,17). Jesus was truth, life. Sanctify them, He prayed, make them holy so they can be one like we are one.

It's wonderful to be sanctified, to be brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus! In this pouring–out time, are you seeking the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

He That Committeth Sin Is of the Devil

The majority of so–called Christians today belong to the world church. Not born–again, they don't believe in holy living, in living free from sin. If you don't live free from sin, the Bible says you belong to the devil. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8). Even in Old Testament days people were warned that the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezekiel 18:20).

The devil contradicted God's warning to Adam and Eve: You will not surely die if you only just taste of the forbidden fruit he said. He convinced Eve to listen to him, and then she influenced Adam to listen. They not only listened, they sold out to the devil for a handful of ashes. Today the same old devil is using the same old tactics, convincing people that no one lives free from sin. No one—unless he or she has Jesus and the divine blood applied to their souls. People must have that divine blood.

Witnesses with Power

Jesus taught the disciples about the Holy Ghost, how He, as the Spirit of Truth, not the spirit of error, would teach and guide them. The last thing Jesus said to His followers before they watched Him ascend back to Heaven was, Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

God will make you a witness—after you receive the power of the Holy Ghost. It's hard to understand how people can read what Jesus said about the Holy Ghost and still think they don't need His baptism. So many claim to believe the Bible, yet they evidently don't believe receiving the Holy Ghost is necessary; they contend that speaking in tongues is fanaticism, not of God.

Speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost; Jesus commanded His followers to not depart from Jerusalem until they received it. And, being

assembled together with them [Jesus], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4,5).

Two Separate Experiences

Some people think they received salvation and the Holy Ghost at the same time. Many preachers teach it. No, they don't get it all at one time. Salvation is just the beginning; salvation and the Holy Ghost baptism are two separate experiences. The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17). Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit of Truth—the Holy Spirit—was with them since they were saved and would be in them when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The real Holy Ghost is definitely of God; however, today some have invented their own Pentecost: Speaking in tongues at will, prophesying at will both come from the devil.

The Holy Ghost is a person; He'll speak for Himself using your vocal organs. Some people say, Listen to me and talk like I talk. We don't allow that in the altar at Grace Cathedral. Here people get the real baptism the way I received Him, like those in the Upper Room received Him on the Day of Pentecost, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave utterance. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4).

The Fire Is Falling

We have the same Holy Ghost baptism that Jesus received, that John the Baptist had from his mother's womb. John said, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matthew 3:11). I love that fire, don't you?

In this pouring-out time, the fire of God is falling, winning thousands of souls for the Lord in each crusade overseas. It, remember, is the same power of the Spirit that Joel prophesied would come, the same power that saves, heals and baptizes in the Holy Spirit. The heathen are coming into the greatness of God; they're hungry for it. They don't want a dead church; they don't want anything dead. The power of God being poured out is the reason so many are coming out of witchcraft, voodooism, and being healed of HIV/AIDS as well as all other kinds of death diseases and afflictions.

The mail pours in daily from people who have been healed and are thrilled beyond words. Pastors are sending for the blest cloths. One pastor reported that in a Sunday morning service in Ghana ninety people were healed of AIDS as he prayed for them using the blest cloth as a point of contact. They went back to their doctors, who could find no sign of AIDS. Of course not; God had healed them. In Malawi, a pastor used the blest cloth in prayer for forty people with AIDS, and they were healed. The doctors verified the healings, but they didn't know what to make of them.

Churches Should Be Soul-Saving Stations

It is essential for people to have this power of the Holy Ghost. Churches without it are not soul-saving stations but cemeteries for the dead. Many churches don't even have—or use—an altar. Some Pentecostal churches are ashamed of the Holy Ghost and won't let people seek Him in the open but in a room off from the congregation.

The Holy Ghost is not a back-room person. We're proud of Him; here people can receive the Holy Ghost at the altar or in the congregation. Here it's, Welcome, Holy Ghost! We love your ways better than our own. We honor you, Holy Spirit!

On the Highway of Holiness

It's by His Spirit that we're taking the Gospel to the world. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 4:6). By the Holy Spirit, not by the spirit of man, His message is going forth. It's the Holy Spirit we must have. The Holy Spirit is preaching sermons penetrating into the innermost being of people; and as they give their lives to God, they go on to receive power from On High.

Bible Pentecost days are here again; we're thrilled with it, proclaim it to the whole world. It's the power of God. Do you have a real Bible Pentecost in your life? Have you been to the Upper Room? Are you in fanaticism, modernism, or do you have the Spirit of Truth?

With the Spirit of Truth we're going right down the highway of holiness. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it (Isaiah 35:8). You who don't have the good Holy Ghost, that power from On High, I hope you get so hungry for Him that you can't eat or sleep until you are baptized in Him. Get down before God and seek the Holy Ghost with your whole heart. Seek Him until He baptizes you right there in your church or in your home, and then grow in His power, wisdom and understanding day after day.

The Jesus Ministry

The Holy Ghost worked throughout the Old Testament with special people, with the prophets both major and minor. In the New Testament we find that the Holy Ghost was to be given to every child of God, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Ghost is falling on people, slaying them in His Spirit while my radio and TV programs are being broadcast. The power of God is paramount in this ministry. Power from On High is the power of the Holy Ghost. This is not an Ernest Angley ministry; it's a Jesus ministry, a Holy Ghost ministry! Praise God for the fire of the Holy Ghost! Thank Him for the fire! We're not ashamed of the fire of the Spirit, I say again; we want it; we desire it. We fast and pray that it will be manifested more and more. The works of the Holy Spirit, the signs and wonders are growing stronger and stronger in this last and final hour. I preach the Holy Ghost; my three associate pastors preach¹²⁶ Him. Through the power of the Holy Ghost we preach, and the Lord confirms what we preach with signs, wonders, miracles and healings. That's the reason you're hearing about this ministry.

Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Perhaps you are in a church that claims you get it all when you receive salvation. You didn't get it all then. Look around and see if your church has the signs and wonders of the Holy Ghost manifested. I preach the Word and in a few minutes the Lord confirms what I preached—and He will never confirm a lie. People see the Spirit of Truth working, the works of the Holy Spirit, the signs and wonders of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost. I believe in miracles because I believe in the God of the Bible.

It's wonderful when the Holy Spirit is able to take a holy tongue and speak in any language or dialect He chooses. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (I Timothy 2:8). Lift up holy hands in praises to the Lord!

They Spoke the Word with Boldness

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). Some people say that God and Jesus are the same person. No, there are three distinct individuals in the Godhead. Here Peter is directing people to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins—salvation—and then go on to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. God said it, I believe it, and that settles it with me. How about you?

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). You are not going to speak the Word of God with boldness until you have power from On High. The Lord let the disciples know they were not to start His church until they received that power.

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). When did that power come? When the fire of the Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost they received the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was a must in the beginning of the Church, and it's a must in this last hour of the Church. There is only one flight out of here: the Rapture. You won't have a reservation on that flight without first receiving the Holy Ghost baptism.

The Holy Ghost Is Promised to the Obedient

The Holy Ghost has come to get the Bride ready for Jesus, the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him (Acts 5:32). The obedient are candidates for the Holy Ghost. Do you think the disobedient will be taken on that one flight out? No. Even the lukewarm will not be taken. Jesus said, So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Revelation 3:16).

In this last hour, there is no room on the fence for those seeking the Holy Ghost. You will go with either God or with the world, with the Jesus church or the world church. Under the guise of religion, the world church is full of deceit, sin, disobedience, ungodliness—if that's what you want, join the world church. We here want the holiness church, the true holiness church. We want the Bible Pentecostal church—and that's what we have, praise God! Where the

book of Acts ended, we have taken up and we will continue in that same manner until Jesus comes again.

Try the Spirits

Ephesians 5:18, And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. Just as on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost began to speak in beautiful dialects and languages through those in the Upper Room, the Lord can speak in any language under the sun. I say again, never try to talk for the Holy Spirit. Some churches are in such fanaticism that they all get together and try to sing in the Spirit, but it's their own spirit, and God is nowhere to be found in such a meeting. That's the spirit of man, not of God.

We must know the spirits. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1). Why is it important that we be able to separate the spirits, the spirit of man, the spirit of the devil and the Spirit of God? Deceiving spirits will take a person over if he or she fails to recognize them and where they're coming from. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you know His Spirit, know you have been baptized in power from On High.

They Received the Holy Ghost

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God [salvation], they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14–17). This is the same baptism I received. The Holy Ghost works in my life to deliver the people, to set the captives free. He preaches through me and has preached through me for years—the good Holy Ghost.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God (Acts 10:44–46). Some don't believe that happened. It doesn't matter what people believe or don't believe. The Bible says, For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written (Romans 3:3,4). That's the reason I preach the way I do: I know God is true.

He [Paul] said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed [since they received salvation]? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were¹²⁸ baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied (Acts 19:2–6).

Pentecost Came to My Family

My family always believed in a born-again experience, in holy living. My parents taught us that we had to live free from sin or we couldn't go to God's Heaven. Then my sixteen-year-old sister received the Holy Ghost, and it spread to other members of the family. Pentecost had come.

For over fifty years my dear Baptist granny thought she had the Holy Ghost, and then she found out she didn't when the Holy Ghost began to fall in her hometown. However, she went on to receive the Holy Ghost; He spoke through her just as He had spoken through those in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost.

Receiving the Holy Ghost is Bible; it's the Word of the Living God. I proclaim it; I stand on it; it's real. People get the real Holy Ghost in my services, talking not by their own will but by the Holy Spirit of God.

Salvation Prayer

Sinner, come to Jesus. Backslider, come home. If you never have been saved, come to Jesus. You who have been saved and then gone astray, come back home before it's too late. Help me pray the sinners' prayer for yourself, if that's your need, and for people all over the world: Oh, God, save my soul! I'm so sorry I sinned against you, but I have come home and I will serve you, Lord, the rest of my life. I believe the blood of Jesus washes away all my sins. Come into my heart, Jesus! Come on in!

If you meant that prayer, now you can say, Hallelujah, He has come! Hallelujah, Jesus is mine!

Go on praising the Lord and receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that power from On High. Study the second chapter of Acts; tell the Lord you want the same experience the Lord poured out on the Day of Pentecost. He is still pouring it out in this hour in a greater way than ever before. It's whosoever will, let him come and receive from the table of the Lord.

Healing for You Is God's Will

You who need healing: Your miracle is on the Lord's table. You can be healed—God healed me. I was dying at twenty-three. Had it not been for the healing power of God, you never would have heard of me. I watched my body go down to almost a skeleton. I was convinced that in a few more days I would be gone. However, in a few more days Jesus came, made me whole all over, healed all my afflictions. Suddenly I was well. The Lord lingered to talk with me. "Later," He said, "you will go on a long fast. When you come out of that fast, you'll have my healing for the people."

Lord, you have given that healing for the people through this servant of yours; you are the healer. I curse the AIDS, the AIDS virus, leprosy, cancer, heart trouble, lung disease, paralysis; through the divine blood name of Jesus, I curse all kinds of diseases. Heal! Heal in the all-powerful name of Jesus! The healing power is flowing to you. Be thou made whole! And I command the little children to be made whole, those little deformed ones, those born with only part of a brain. God is re-creating brains; He's done it again and again, and I command it done for your child in the holy, holy name of the Lord.

I love to preach the Word because, I say again, the Lord confirms it with signs, wonders, miracles and healings. God is the healer; I give Him all the honor, praise and the glory. Feel His presence; the miracle power is in the air. It's the work of the great God; man can't do these things. Everything you need is in the power of the divine blood. Victory is in the blood; accept it and praise God for it.

What does God say about the Holy Ghost? This message gives you only some of what He says, but it is more than enough to convince the honest-hearted that everyone needs Him. He is amazingly wonderful!

I am here, saith the Lord, to give you another ultimate anointing. You need this anointing now and for all your tomorrows to do what I have ordained you to do. Feel me now and know I am your Lord, I am your God and I love you with unending love. Open your heart's door, saith the Lord, and my Spirit will flow this great anointing into your innermost being.

The Lord has spread a table before you; ask what you will; take what you will from the table of the Lord. The call of the Lord is "Come and dine! Come and dine! Take what you will!"

- **The human spirit**

A human being has a body, which is the physical part, comprising flesh, blood, and bones. He also has a soul, which comprises the mind and conscience, emotions and will. Thirdly, he has a spirit, which makes him aware of God and allows him to know and communicate with God.

At birth, our spirits are separated from God because of inherited sin. But "the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord," Proverbs 20:27 (RSV). It is the part of us which can be set alight by God's Holy Spirit, when we respond to His call to repentance.

The Human spirit is a component of human philosophy, psychology, art, and knowledge - the spiritual or mental part of humanity. While the term can be used with the same meaning as "human soul", human spirit is sometimes used to refer to the impersonal, universal or higher component of human nature in contrast to soul or psyche which can refer to the ego or lower element. The human spirit includes our intellect, emotions, fears, passions, and creativity.

In the models of Daniel A. Helminiak and Bernard Lonergan, human spirit is considered to be the mental functions of awareness, insight, understanding, judgement and other reasoning powers. It is distinguished from the separate component of psyche which comprises the entities of emotion, images, memory and personality.

The human spirit is the incorporeal part of man. The Bible says that the human spirit is the very breath of Almighty God and was breathed¹³⁰ into man at the beginning of God's creation: "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). It is the human spirit that gives us a consciousness of self and other remarkable, though limited, "God-like"

qualities. The human spirit includes our intellect, emotions, fears, passions, and creativity. It is this spirit that provides us the unique ability to comprehend and understand (Job 32:8, 18).

The words spirit and breath are translations of the Hebrew word neshamah and the Greek word pneuma. The words mean “strong wind, blast, or inspiration.” Neshamah is the source of life that vitalizes humanity (Job 33:4). It is the intangible, unseen human spirit that governs man’s mental and emotional existence. The apostle Paul said, “Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?” (1 Corinthians 2:11). Upon death the “spirit returns back to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7; see also Job 34:14-15; Psalm 104:29-30).

Every human being has a spirit, and it is distinct from the “spirit,” or life, of animals. God made man differently from the animals in that He created us “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, man is able to think, feel, love, design, create, and enjoy music, humor, and art. And it is because of the human spirit that we have a “free will” that no other creature on earth has.

The human spirit was damaged in the fall. When Adam sinned, his ability to fellowship with God was broken; he did not die physically that day, but he died spiritually. Ever since, the human spirit has borne the effects of the fall. Before salvation, a person is characterized as spiritually “dead” (Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 2:13). A relationship with Christ revitalizes our spirits and renews us day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Interestingly, just as the human spirit was divinely breathed into the first man, so the Holy Spirit was breathed into the first disciples in John 20:22: “And with that [Jesus] breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Adam was made alive by the breath of God, and we, as “new creations” in Christ, are made spiritually alive by the “Breath of God,” the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:3; Romans 6:4). Upon our acceptance of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God joins with our own spirit in ways we cannot comprehend. The apostle John said, “This is how we know that we live in Him and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

When we allow the Spirit of God to lead our lives, the “Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). As children of God, we are no longer led by our own spirit but by God’s Spirit, who leads us to eternal life.

- **Angels**

These are described as good spirits, or “ministering spirits” to help Christians, Hebrews 1:14. They are God’s messengers. Though we do not see them, God sends them to help and protect Christians when in trouble.

They are also sent to bring God's answers to Christians' prayers, Daniel 10:10-14.

• Evil spirits

These are also called demons, or unclean spirits, who belong to Satan's kingdom. This is a highly organised empire of evil spirits, Ephesians 6:12. Satan operates through them. Their activity is to oppose God and to try to defeat His purposes. They oppress people to hinder their welfare. Their time on earth, like that of Satan, is limited, and their doom was sealed, along with Satan, when Jesus died on the cross and rose again, Matthew 25:41.



6. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO SPIRIT POSSESSION, AND ITS TREATMENT

Christian attitudes to demon possession

Evil spirits have no bodies, and will sometimes enter bodies of willing human beings to effect their influence and evil activities. Evil spirits defile a person, and can cause certain sicknesses, and be responsible for many evil activities. Christians believe that a person who is possessed of a demon can only be set free if he/she wants to become a Christian, and then the demon can be cast out.

The Holy Spirit is a Person - not just a force or a power. He is good, and leads people in the ways of righteousness. He indwells Christians. If a demon possessed person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit drives out the demon and takes its place in the heart of the new believer.

Treatment of demon possession in Christianity

Since Christians believe that demons are bad and are responsible for much evil, they should be cast out. Christians believe that freedom from demons comes through repentance and

confession of sin, and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This requires a total commitment of one's life to Jesus Christ, otherwise the condition will only become worse, Luke 11:24-26.

Exorcism (casting out demons) is sometimes practised. This may take place when someone, who is under the power of demons, wants to become a Christian. On such occasions, prayer is made, commanding the demons to leave in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Scriptures may be quoted,

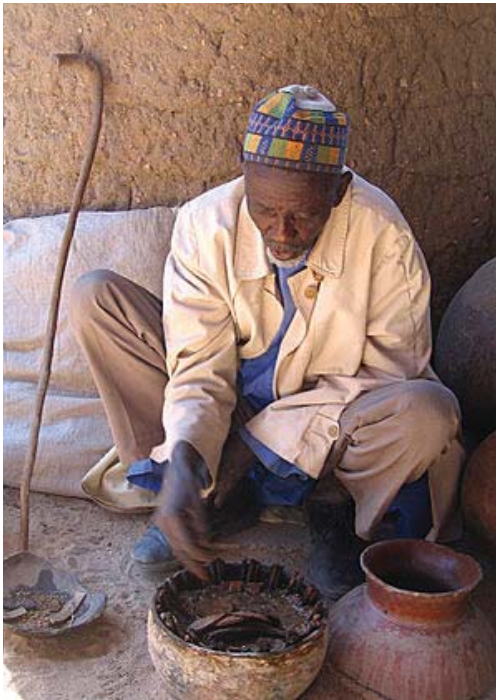
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referring to the cleansing power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and His triumph over the powers of evil, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7; 2:13.

7. DEMONIC PRACTICES FORBIDDEN

There are certain forms of demonic practices which the Bible clearly forbids. These practices are detestable to God, and harmful to people. They open up a person's life to the influence of evil spirits and demon possession, Deuteronomy 18:9-12, Isaiah 8:19-22.

- **Divination.** This is the attempt to predict future events, which cannot be perceived by normal means. Divination may also be used to "discover" other users of witchcraft. These practices are condemned in Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:9ff.



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- **Witchcraft.** Any activity which leads to devil worship, and/or deliberate contact with evil spirits, is extremely dangerous. This power comes from Satan, and causes spiritual darkness, demon possession, and eventual death. It is condemned as rebellion against God, 1

Samuel 15:23.

- **Magic.** This includes the use of amulets and charms intended to protect the wearer from evil influences. It also includes occult practices with roots and plants, as a means of protection against evil, or believed to enhance beauty and fertility, Acts 19:18-20.

- **Spells or omens.** These are incantations or words used as an alternative to charms. They are also used in connection with curses, Isaiah 8:19.

Sorcery. This is a general term covering the arts of astrology, palmistry and the use of familiar spirits, Isaiah 4:7, 9-13; 2 Kings 9:22.

EXERCISE

1. State the difference between ancestral spirits and dissatisfied spirits.
2. State the difference between ancestral spirits and guardian possession spirits?
3. What Christian advice can you give to someone who is demon possessed and wants to consult a medicine man?
4. Narrate the story of
 - (a) The man in the Synagogue
 - (b) The Gerasene demon possessed man
 - (c) The demon possessed boy
5. Write brief notes on:
 - (a) Angels
 - (b) Demons
 - (c) The Holy Spirit
6. Debate on the motion: A Christian cannot be demon possessed.
7. What are the Christian attitudes to demon possession?
8. What are the dangers of involvement in demonic practices?

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UNIT IV

- i. Give examples of stories they have heard used by teachers, preachers and other adults to teach or illustrate a point.
- ii. Explain and illustrate what a parable is.
- iii. Relate the following parables: the Two Sons, the Money lender, the Sower, the Rich Fool, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost Son, the Faithful Servant, the Unfruitful Fig tree, the Servant's Duty.
- iv. explain the cultural and religious situation to which it is refers, show what it teaches about God and about human behaviour and who how it can be applied in modern Zambia.
- v. explain and illustrate what Jesus used parables for. -compare the parables of Jesus with traditional Zambian proverbs used to teach or illustrate right behaviour.

PARABLES

"The parable is, has been and always will be,
the language of the wise for speaking to the simple,
and the language of the simple for speaking to the wise..."

Jesus conveyed some of his most interesting teachings through parables, although there were many other means of communication in his days, apparently more direct and conventional. It has been calculated that about one third of Jesus' teachings transmitted in the synoptic gospels have come to us in the form of parables¹ The teaching of Jesus is so much related to parables, that when the word "parable" is mentioned many associate it immediately with Jesus and the Gospels. However, the parable (called in Hebrew *mashal*), is quite a common genre in rabbinic wisdom and oriental literature, largely widespread through all times, milieux and cultures around the world.

Why did Jesus choose this particular literary genre of "parable" to convey some of His most important messages?

My essay has two aims:

1. To find the main reasons of this choice, through an analysis of the parables taught by Jesus, paying attention both to their content and to their narrative structures.
2. On the basis of this model, to set a pattern for an eventual use of parables in religious education in our days.

While I seek to integrate faith through parables in my own teaching, I hope that my study will be valuable for those who, like me, work in the not so easy task of the religious education of youth and young adults, in a secularized society, where fiction plays such an important role.

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What is a parable? The problem of definition

To know the genre of a document is the first step to understanding it. Each genre, by its own nature, requires a different reading approach. We do not read in the same way an article

in a law code and an article in a newspaper. We do not read in the same way a page of history and a poem.

The term "parable" has been largely defined as a "short simple story from which a moral lesson may be drawn"¹. This is why it is commonly applied to different literary genres, ranging from the tale and the fable to the allegory and the myth. In fact, many do not see a true difference between them, and they easily confuse these different forms. But if we want to be more precise, we soon find that the parables of Jesus are quite different, and a little more difficult to define.¹

- a) Some associate the gospel parable with the fable.

The fable is a short "fictitious story meant to teach a moral lesson". This is the way in which fables were traditionally used by the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, and their cultural heirs. The Bible also contains a few fables like "The Trees and the Bramble" (Judges 9:8-15), or "The Thistle that Wanted to Marry the Cedar's Daughter" (2 Kings 14:9). The main intention of the fable is to criticize human weaknesses. This is done indirectly, for example, by means of intelligent reflections of talking plants or animals.

But this is not the case with the gospel parables. In them, plants or animals – the tares, the mustard tree, the lost sheep or the fish in the net – never express their feelings or opinions. Only human beings talk. And besides that, very few gospel parables could be classified under the category of moralizing literature.

- b) Others have tried to relate the gospel parable²⁴ with what the Greeks called myth.

The myth was a legendary story designed to illustrate or explain realities difficult to grasp in rational terms, such as the phenomena of nature, the origin of humankind, or the religious roots of a people. Thus, for example, in order to point out the danger of self-love, the ancient Greek liked to refer to the myth of Narcissus – the beautiful youth who, after Echo's death, is made to pine away for love of his own reflection in a spring. He ended up drowning and being changed into a flower, always trying to embrace its own image. The didactic interest of the myth is not in its historical value, since there is none, but in its permanent existential truth.

Although most of the parables also underline permanent truths, their style is completely different from the myths. There is in fact nothing mythic or legendary in losing a coin, or in finding weeds in a field of corn. These are everyday realities that have little in common with myths.

- c) More often the parables have been associated with allegories.

Allegories are narratives "in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning". The Old Testament contains many allegories. One of the best known is the allegory of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7), where the vineyard represents Israel; the owner is God; the hedge and wall, the divine protection, etc.

For many centuries, the gospel parables were regarded as allegories, and interpreted accordingly. But this view was refuted by Adolf Jülicher at the end of the nineteenth century, and the best studies produced after him agree that parables are something

different from classic allegories. In fact, although the parables may also have allegoric elements, there is a key difference between the two in the fact that allegories are usually static, while a parable is always a story, even if it is often very short and simple, culminating in an unexpected end.

Although the parables of Jesus may seem close to the tale, the fable, the myth and the allegory, and certainly have something ~~25~~ common with them, they have their own peculiarities that make them somehow unique.

- d) This is why attention should be paid to the fact that the parables of Jesus are called in the New Testament not *allegoria* or *mythos* but *parabolè*.

It is interesting to observe that the term *parabolè* comes from the language of ballistics, from the root *ball-* ("to throw") and the preposition *parà* ("the other side"), with the meaning of "throwing along" or "putting side by side". A *parabolè* (like a parabola in geometry) is, first of all, the indirect, curved trajectory of a projectile going from point A to point B over an obstacle. In the same way, the parable, as rhetorical device, is a narrative that allows the story-teller to reach the intended target through an unexpected itinerary, following another path, so that the receiver cannot prevent the result and avoid the impact.

A parable is therefore a story, true or fictitious, with an unexpected lesson brought up by means of comparison. But, contrary to other anecdotes and illustrations, instead of being intended to merely illustrate or amuse, the parable is intended to surprise and to reveal. The narrative brings, in the setting of the familiar, the surprise of the unfamiliar, disrupting the listeners in their expectations or in their perception of reality. This allows the parable to increase the force of its impact.

The fact that the parable often adopts the light tone of a tale does not mean that this genre is less serious than other biblical genres, nor that we can take its lessons less seriously. In fact, it is precisely because the subjects of the parables are so important and deep that they are better transmitted in this way.

26

Characteristics of the parables of Jesus

If we are not very familiar with the gospel parables, at first reading we may be easily tempted to see them as very simple stories. They speak of invitations to banquets, of fishermen casting their nets, of women baking bread, of teenagers leaving home and of employees who have problems with their bosses. Since these are situations that we all may know by experience, the parables seem to us more accessible than they really are. Their first listeners, however, realized very soon that, behind their modest appearance, the parables were hiding unexpected dimensions. Rather than ~~examples~~ illustrating reality, they carry surprising messages. When we analyse them in depth, we discover that the parables constitute some of the most perplexing and enigmatic passages in Scripture.

What make these stories so special?

1. First of all, they are built on an element of surprise. It is not frequent, nor normal, to excuse oneself for declining an invitation of the king to a royal wedding banquet by claiming that one has bought some oxen that need to be tried out just at that moment! It is not frequent or common that the owner of a business should pay the same salary to the workers who have worked one hour as to those who have worked twelve! The parables are full of mysteries. They teach as much through evidence as through extravagance. Very often their intention is to surprise.
2. Second, the parables make it easier to establish unexpected connections. The parable is built on characters, images and situations already known by the listeners, allowing the storyteller to establish, in a very natural way, unexpected links with new ideas or situations. The art of metaphor rests precisely in the capacity of establishing comparisons between ideas and situations that, at first sight, do not have much in common, thus revealing unexpected truths, and new aspects of reality.
3. The fact of appealing more directly to the imagination than to reason, allows the parable to open more easily the door which leads to the mysterious inner world, in which everyone builds his/her own view of reality, without the pressures, obstacles, complexes and preconceptions of the exterior world. Through fantasy, the parable helps the receiver to visualize abstract notions and new realities that the spirit is able to conceive and that would be impossible to reach by another way.
4. The narrative language is par excellence the language of contacts and relations. The message easily reaches its target when the listener identifies his/her own experience with the story told. This is why stories and anecdotes are much more efficient than direct orders to produce change in reluctant persons. A good story may replace with certain advantages, and in a much more elegant way, all the advice that we are inclined to give and that so often is not immediately welcomed. The mind of the listener, as soon as it captures the message, naturally acknowledges by itself its final intention without needing somebody to dictate it. The solution to the problem comes spontaneously just by presenting it in a different way by means of a comparison:
 - This is like sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. This does not work. You need a new coat! (Mt 9:16-17).
 - There are moments when one wonders how to face tomorrow. Look at the birds. They do not worry... Are you not much more valuable than they? Why worry about problems that you will probably never have, or that God will finally solve? (Mt 6:25-26).
5. Parables and anecdotes have a seductive effect because they do not impose anything, they do not threaten. The audience has to wait until the end of the story to discover how its lesson applies to his/her personal case. This way of indirect communication respects the autonomy of the listener, leaving him/her¹⁴⁰ the space of freedom necessary to establish by him/herself the connection between the story told and his own situation.^{ii[9]}

Used rightly, parables, stories and anecdotes have a powerful effect, not only as didactic resources, but also as therapeutic tools. For they are able to overcome, in the simplest

way, our natural resistance and self-defense mechanisms, appealing to our best common sense. To a hesitant, insecure and fearful person, Jesus may say:

- "It is difficult to plow the field looking back at the same time. If you really want to go forward, stop looking through the rear-view mirror." (Luke 9 :62)

This type of indirect message has more chances to be accepted than a direct rebuke. To say "It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick" (Mt 9:12), is wiser and more tactful than saying, for example, "This is not your business"...

6. Many of the illustrations used by Jesus belong to the category of "self-evident metaphors". Their premises work on a hidden form of truism enveloped in an almost irrefutable argument. This use of truism is very useful for giving advice in an indirect way, because it does not hurt the individual nor interfere with his/her liberty. It is formulated just as a description of reality:

- "If the salt loses its saltiness...it is no longer good for anything." (Mt 6 :13)
- "People do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. They put it on its stand." (Mt 5:15)
- "You recognize trees by their fruit." (Mt 7:16-20)

These statements arouse spontaneously the immediate agreement of listeners, thus avoiding controversy. Since they are logically unquestionable, they are much more efficient than any kind of argumentation, or than any sermonizing. The strength of their impact rests in their ability to convince the listener without imposing anything.

This is the case for many parables, but not for all. Some are really controversial, and some are even comparable to delayed weapons. Joachim Jeremias calls these parables "weapons of war". They are intended to reach a target that may hurt the receivers in their aim to make them to surrender to God's grace.²⁹

7. Jesus knew how to combine in his parables spirituality, ethics and aesthetics. In order to touch the conscience of his listeners while respecting the complexities of the human mind, he was a master at the craft of bringing together deep thinking and the beauty of art. As with any good artist, Jesus relied heavily on inspiration. He had his own personal way of looking at reality, with his own perspective and his own viewpoint. His stories have a mirror effect, and help us to see ourselves from God's point of view. This is why they were as fascinating for his first listeners as they are for us today.

Why did Jesus teach in parables?

The question regarding the reasons for¹⁴¹ Jesus' parables was raised from the very beginning by his own disciples: "The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?'" (Mt 13:13). The answer is perplexing, because it may be understood in two different, even opposing ways:

- a) According to Matthew "Because they do not see and do not understand" (Mt 13 :11-17), which may be interpreted to say, "in order to help the audience to understand better",
- b) But according to Mark, "so that they may be ever hearing but never understanding" (Mk 4:10-12), it is to say, to "prevent them for understanding!"

If we take both accounts seriously, as equally valid, we may conclude that Jesus' answer may be understood in the sense that his purpose was not a simple one. The parables were intended at the same time, for some listeners as a means to understand the mysteries of God, and for others, as a means to conceal this very same teaching.

Ellen G. White lists the main reasons for Jesus' use of parables in the following way:

1. To illustrate his messages

«In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world (...) the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truth by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.
2. To bring new revelation

"Christ sought to remove that which obscured the truth. The veil that sin has cast over the face of nature, He came to draw aside, bringing to view the spiritual glory that all things were created to reflect. His words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation.
3. To awaken inquiry

"Jesus desired to awaken inquiry. He sought to arouse the careless, and impress truth upon the heart. Parable teaching was popular, and commanded the respect and attention, not only of the Jews, but of the people of other nations. No more effective method of instruction could he have employed.
4. To reach a larger audience

"Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. But using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten."
5. To protect his message from his enemies

"And He had another reason for teaching in parables. Among the multitudes that gathered about Him, there were priests and rabbis, scribes and elders, Herodians and rulers, world-loving, bigoted, ambitious men, who desired above all things to find some accusation against Him (...) The Saviour understood the character of these men, and presented truth in such a way that they could find nothing by which to bring His case before the Sanhedrin. In parables he rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in direct denunciation,

they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry.

The parable of the Two sons

Some parables are designed to convince people of their own sin. For instance, Nathan convinces King David of the seriousness of his sin with Bathsheba by using a parable (II Samuel 12:1). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ pointedly targets the evil of His adversaries with parables in a manner they cannot deny or refute. Such condemnatory parables are appeals to the offenders to repent, and they simultaneously judge them out of their own mouths.

In the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32), Jesus fully intends to have the chief priests and elders of the people convict themselves. From the first words of His parable—"But what do you think?"—Jesus has them questioning their own thoughts and motives. Obviously, He wants them to react to His parable as David did to Nathan's, but as subsequent events show, they did not. Will we?



1. How do the character traits of the two sons differ? Matthew 21:28; Hebrews 3:8-13; Romans 10:2-4.

Comment: The character of each son is vastly different. One son is independent, disobedient, and insolent, but after thinking about his ways, returns to carry out his responsibility. The second is a big talker, full of promises but no action. In these two men, Christ describes, on the one hand, sinners of all types, who, when convicted by John the Baptist and Himself, turned away from their iniquities, repented, and obeyed God. On the other hand are the scribes, Pharisees, and other self-righteous people who feign a zeal for the law but will not receive the gospel.

2. Why does the first son regret his disobedience? Matthew 21:29; Job 24:1-25; Lamentations 3:27; Romans 8:7.

Comment: Both sons hear the same command: "Son, go work today in my vineyard." Parents should not raise their children in the destructiveness of idleness, and similarly, God commands His children to work, though we are all heirs. Generally, the first reaction of a sinner to God's truth is "I will not!" which shows the enmity between man and God. The disobedient son represents those who have no desire to make an effort to obey God. They neither fear God nor pretend to, seeing no immediate reward for their efforts. Although hypocrisy may exist in other areas of their lives, they are not hypocritical in their stance toward God—they flat out reject Him! Eventually, when called, they realize that true happiness is to work for God to produce eternally rewarding fruit.

3. Why does the second son not go to work in his father's vineyard? Matthew 21:30; 23:25-26; Job 8:13; 27:8-12; Luke 6:45; Galatians 5:19-23.

Comment: The second son deceitfully professes respect and obedience, but he never does his duty. The contradiction between his word and his work exposes his major character flaw—hypocrisy. It is harder to convince a hypocrite of his true state than a flagrant sinner because, in deceiving himself, the hypocrite follows his own standards and form of godliness. Contrarily, the flagrant sinner *knows* he is evil.

Many in mainstream Christianity profess to know God but deny Him in their works. They appear pious at church, but their personal lives are riddled with sin. They are living a lie, and out of their smooth mouths their deceitful hearts speak. Their efforts produce the works of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit. The second son does not go to work because he lives for the moment and never comprehends his father's ultimate plan, its wonderful results, and its long-term benefits.

4. Since both sin, why does the openly disobedient son eventually do the will of his father? Matthew 21:31; Luke 7:29-30; Ezekiel 18:30-32; Acts 3:19; Romans 2:4-11.

Comment: The sons' ultimate actions reveal their difference. The first son, after open refusal, repents of his sin—better late than never—and goes to work for his father. He overcomes and changes from bad to good. After experiencing the negative results of sin, he yields to God's instruction, changing direction and doing as his father commanded him—the fruit of his repentance.

The proof of our repentance comes to light when we comply with the Father's will and do good works with the help of the Holy Spirit. The result is the production of the fruit of the Spirit.

5. Why do the Pharisees not recognize true righteousness? Matthew 21:32; Luke 7:36-50; Revelation 3:16-17.

Comment: John the Baptist proclaimed the truth and lived it, but the Pharisees rejected John's witness and professed their own righteousness while living unrighteously. In this parable, Jesus distinguishes those who generally knew the way of God (Jews) from those who

did not (Gentiles). The Jews initially appeared righteous, having the revelation of God and the ordinances of justice established among them. The Gentiles were initially ignorant of righteousness—the way of God—and were sinful in all their conduct. From this, we can learn that those who feel they are knowledgeable and need nothing more fail to realize their spiritual bankruptcy and see no need to change. They may appear righteous, but being deceived by Satan, they believe their own righteousness will save them. Therefore, because they see no sin in their lives, they see no reason to repent.

But God's true church—the Bride of Christ—makes herself ready by repenting and overcoming sin, by truly valuing and appreciating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and by obeying and revering the Father and His Son. The long-term rewards for obeying the Father's command to work in His vineyard are tremendous.

The Parable of the Two Sons can be found in Matthew 21:28-32. The basic story is of a man with two sons who told them to go work in the vineyard. The first son refused, but later obeyed and went. The second son initially expressed obedience, but actually disobeyed and refused to work in the vineyard. The son who ultimately did the will of his father was the first son because he eventually obeyed. Jesus then likens the first son to tax collectors and prostitutes—the outcasts of Jewish society—because they believed John the Baptist and accepted “the way of righteousness” (v. 32), in spite of their initial disobedience to the Law.

The key interpretive point in understanding the Parable of the Two Sons comes in defining to whom Jesus is speaking. For that we need to look at the overall context of this passage. Matthew chapter 21 begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The whole point of Matthew's gospel is to show Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. The crowd responds by shouting Hosannas and praises to the King. The King's first act upon entering Jerusalem is to cleanse the temple (21:12-17). Afterwards, we see Jesus cursing a fig tree (21:18-22). This account may seem an isolated story, but Jesus was making a strong symbolic point. The fig tree is often symbolic of Israel (cf. Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7). The fact that the fig tree had leaves but no fruit is symbolic of Israel's religious activity—i.e., all the trappings of spirituality, but no substance. Israel may have had the leaves of activity, but not the fruit of repentance and obedience to God, which is why Jesus tells them the prostitutes and tax collectors will enter the kingdom ahead of them (v. 31).

In Matthew 21:23-27, the religious authorities—the chief priests and elders—question Jesus' authority. Who is this Jesus who comes into Jerusalem receiving the praises of the masses and drives the moneychangers out of the temple? The stage is set for the showdown. It is in this context that Jesus tells three parables—the Two Sons, the Tenants, and the Wedding Feast. Each of these parables is told to the Jewish religious leaders, each illustrates their rejection of Jesus, and each pronounces judgment on Israel for their rejection of their Messiah. In the Parable of the Two Sons, the leaders of Israel are the second son who claimed obedience, but did not do the will of the father.

The Pharisee named Simon (Luke 7:36, 40), the woman who wet and wiped his feet (Luke 7:37-38), and the other guests (Luke 7:48-49) were all listening as Jesus spoke this parable.

The Parable of the Two Debtors

It appears in only one of the Canonical gospels of the New Testament. According to Luke 7:36-50, Jesus uses the story of two debtors to explain that a woman loves him more than his host, because she has been forgiven of greater sins. This parable is told after his anointing recounted in John 12:1-8.

A similar anointing in the other synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9) may not refer to the same event, and this parable is not to be confused with the parable of the unforgiving servant, where a king forgives his servant, and the servant in turn is unable to have mercy on someone with a lesser debt.

This parable would have challenged the judgemental attitude of Simon (Luke 7:39); encouraged and comforted the immoral woman (Luke 7: 37 New Living Translation) and probably rebuked the other guests who were watching on with a critical spirit.

The first debtor in the parable owed 500 day's pay. The denarii, or silver as some versions put it, was a day's pay for a labourer (compare Luke 7:41 with Matthew 20:1-2). The second debtor owed only fifty days pay.

The real point of this story is - how much did your sin cost Jesus? Maybe if we could put it in monetary terms we would appreciate his sacrifice more. The truth is that we should all be as appreciative as the first debtor who owed more. It is the nature of sin that makes it costly not the symptoms of sin. Sin is rejecting God. The symptoms of sin are the bad things we do.

Falling in love with God what makes us passionate believers. Murders do not necessary make better committed Christians. Jesus died for us because he loves us (John 3:16), we will serve him faithfully if we love him in return (Romans 5:5).

When Jesus spoke to the woman in Luke 7:47-48 he was acting out of the love he had for her. The woman's act of washing Jesus' feet was her responds to Jesus compassion. She was the debtor who had been forgiven a lot - and she knew it. Apparently some people think they have only been forgiven a little (Luke 7:47). This maybe because they think their sins were insignificant.



The Parable of the Sower (also known as the Parable of the Four Soils) is found in Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:2-9; and Luke 8:4-8. After presenting this parable to the multitude, Jesus interprets it for His disciples in Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20; and Luke 8:11-15.

The Parable of the Sower concerns a sower who scatters seed, which falls on four different types of ground. The hard ground “by the way side” prevents the seed from sprouting at all, and the seed becomes nothing more than bird food. The stony ground provides enough soil for the seeds to germinate and begin to grow, but because there is “no deepness of earth,” the plants do not take root and are soon withered in the sun. The thorny ground allows the seed to grow, but the competing thorns choke the life out of the beneficial plants. The good ground receives the seed and produces much fruit. Jesus¹⁴⁷ explanation of the Parable of the Sower highlights four different responses to the gospel. The seed is “the word of the kingdom.” The hard ground represents someone who is hardened by sin; he hears but does not understand the Word, and Satan plucks the message away, keeping the heart dull and preventing the Word

from making an impression. The stony ground pictures a man who professes delight with the Word; however, his heart is not changed, and when trouble arises, his so-called faith quickly disappears. The thorny ground depicts one who seems to receive the Word, but whose heart is full of riches, pleasures, and lusts; the things of this world take his time and attention away from the Word, and he ends up having no time for it. The good ground portrays the one who hears, understands, and receives the Word—and then allows the Word to accomplish its result in his life. The man represented by the “good ground” is the only one of the four who is truly saved, because salvation’s proof is fruit (Matthew 3:7-8; 7:15-20). To summarize the point of the Parable of the Sower: “A man’s reception of God’s Word is determined by the condition of his heart.” A secondary lesson would be “Salvation is more than a superficial, albeit joyful, hearing of the gospel. Someone who is truly saved will go on to prove it.” May our faith and our lives exemplify the “good soil” in the Parable of the Sower.



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The **Parable of the Rich Fool** is a parable of Jesus which appears in only one of the Canonical gospels of the New Testament. According to Luke 12:13-21, the parable reflects the foolishness of attaching too much importance to wealth.

An abbreviated version of the parable also appears in the non canonical Gospel of Thomas (Saying 63) and this parable has been depicted by artists such as Rembrandt.



The Parable of the Rich Fool can be found in Luke 12:13–21. The key to understanding this parable is in verse 15 (and later summarized in verse 21). Luke 12:15 says, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Jesus says this to the man who asked Him to arbitrate between him and his brother. In ancient times, the firstborn was guaranteed a double portion of the family inheritance. More than likely, the brother who was addressing Jesus was not the firstborn and was asking for an equal share of the inheritance. Jesus refuses to arbitrate their dispute and gets to the heart of the matter: Covetousness! Jesus warns this person, and all within earshot, that our lives are not to be about gathering wealth. Life is so much more than the “abundance of possessions.”

Jesus proceeds to tell the man the Parable of the Rich Fool. This person was materially blessed by God; his land “produced plentifully” (verse 16). As God continued to bless the man, instead of using his increase to further the will of God, all he was interested in was managing his increase and accumulating his growing wealth. So the man builds larger barns in place of the existing ones and starts planning an early retirement. Unbeknownst to him, this was his last night on planet earth. Jesus then closes the story by saying, “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

So the point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is twofold. First, we are not to devote our lives to the gathering and accumulation of wealth. There is an interesting point made in the parable.

God says to the man in the story, “And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” This echoes the thought expressed in Ecclesiastes 2:18 (“I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me”). You see it all the time in people who are singularly devoted to the accumulation of wealth. What happens to all that wealth when they die? It gets left behind to others who didn’t earn it and won’t appreciate it. Furthermore, if money is your master, that means God is not (Matthew 6:24).

The second point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is the fact that we are not blessed by God to hoard our wealth to ourselves. We are blessed to be a blessing in the lives of others, and we are blessed to build the kingdom of God. The Bible says if our riches increase, we are not to set our hearts upon them (Psalm 62:10). The Bible also says there is one who gives freely and grows all the richer (Proverbs 11:24). Finally, the Bible says we are to honor God with the first fruits of our increase (Proverbs 3:9–10). The point is clear; if we honor God with what He has given us, He will bless with more so that we can honor Him with more. There is a passage in 2 Corinthians that summarizes this aptly (2 Corinthians 9:6–15). In that passage Paul says, “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that having all contentment in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” We are blessed by God, so we can in turn “abound in every good work” and be a blessing in the lives of others. So, if God has blessed you with material wealth “set not your heart on it” and “be rich toward God.” That is the message of the Parable of the Rich Fool.

The **Parable of the Lost Sheep** is one of the parables of Jesus. It appears in two of the Canonical gospels of the New Testament, as well as in the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas.

According to the Gospels of Matthew (18:12–14) and Luke (15:3–7), a shepherd leaves his flock of ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one which is lost. It is the first member of a trilogy about redemption that Jesus tells after the Pharisees and religious leaders accuse him of welcoming and eating with "sinners"



apud: phillip medhurst

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP. MATTHEW 18:12. JAN LUYKEN

excudit: harry kossuth

The **Parable of the Lost Coin** is one of the parables of Jesus. It appears in only one of the Canonical gospels of the New Testament. According to Luke 15:8-10, a woman searches for a lost coin. It is a member of a trilogy on redemption that Jesus tells after the Pharisees and religious leaders accuse him of welcoming and eating with "sinners"



MILLAIS. — THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER.





The Parable of the Prodigal Son is found in Luke chapter 15, verses 11-32. The main character in the parable, the forgiving father, whose character remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude to the lost. The younger son symbolizes the lost (the tax collectors and sinners of that day, Luke 15:1), and the elder brother represents the self-righteous (the Pharisees and teachers of the law of that day, Luke 15:2). The major theme of this parable seems not to be so much the conversion of the sinner, as in the previous two parables of Luke 15, but rather the restoration of a believer into fellowship with the Father. In the first two parables, the owner went out to look for what was lost (Luke 15:1-10), whereas in this story the father waits and watches eagerly for his son's return. We see a progression through the three parables from the relationship of one in a hundred (Luke 15:1-7), to one in ten (Luke 15:8-10), to one in one (Luke 15:11-32), demonstrating God's love for each individual and His personal attentiveness towards all humanity. We see in this story the graciousness of the father overshadowing the sinfulness of the son, as it is the memory of the father's goodness that brings the prodigal son to repentance (Romans 2:4).

We will begin unfolding the meaning of this parable at verse 12, in which the younger son asks his father for his share of his estate, which would have been half of what his older brother would receive; in other words, 1/3 for the younger, 2/3 for the older (Deuteronomy 21:17). Though it was perfectly within his rights to ask, it was not a loving thing to do, as it implied that he wished his father dead. Instead of rebuking his son, the father patiently grants him his request. This is a picture of God letting a sinner go his own way (Deuteronomy 30:19). We all possess this foolish ambition to be independent, which is at the root of the sinner persisting in his sin (Genesis 3:6; Romans 1:28). A sinful state is a departure and distance from God (Romans 1:21). A sinful state is also a state of constant discontent. Luke 12:15 says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." This son learned the hard way that covetousness leads to a life of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He also learned that the most valuable things in life are the things you cannot buy or replace.¹⁵⁴

In verse 13 we read that he travels to a distant country. It is evident from his previous actions that he had already made that journey in his heart, and the physical departure was a display of

his willful disobedience to all the goodness his father had offered (Proverbs 27:19; Matthew 6:21; 12:34). In the process, he squanders all his father had worked so hard for on selfish, shallow fulfillment, losing everything. His financial disaster is followed by a natural disaster in the form of a famine, which he failed to plan for (Genesis 41:33-36). At this point he sells himself into physical slavery to a Gentile and finds himself feeding pigs, a detestable job to the Jewish people (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8; Isaiah 65:4; 66:17). Needless to say, he must have been incredibly desperate at that point to willingly enter into such a loathsome position. And what an irony that his choices led him to a position in which he had no choice but to work, and for a stranger at that, doing the very things he refused to do for his father. To top it off, he apparently was paid so little that he longed to eat the pig's food. Just when he must have thought life could not get any worse, he couldn't even find mercy among the people. Apparently, once his wealth was gone, so were his friends. The text clearly says, "No one gave him anything" (vs. 16). Even these unclean animals seemed to be better off than he was at this point. This is a picture of the state of the lost sinner or a rebellious Christian who has returned to a life of slavery to sin (2 Peter 2:19-21). It is a picture of what sin really does in a person's life when he rejects the Father's will (Hebrews 12:1; Acts 8:23). "Sin always promises more than it gives, takes you further than you wanted to go, and leaves you worse off than you were before." Sin promises freedom but brings slavery (John 6:23).

The son begins to reflect on his condition and realizes that even his father's servants had it better than he. His painful circumstances help him to see his father in a new light and bring him hope (Psalm 147:11; Isaiah 40:30-31; Romans 8:24-25; 1 Timothy 4:10). This is reflective of the sinner when he/she discovers the destitute condition of his life because of sin. It is a realization that, apart from God, there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:25-26). This is when a repentant sinner "comes to his senses" and longs to return to the state of fellowship with God which was lost when Adam sinned (Genesis 3:8). The son devises a plan of action. Though at a quick glance it may seem that he may not be truly repentant, but rather motivated by his hunger, a more thorough study of the text gives new insights. He is willing to give up his rights as his father's son and take on the position of his servant. We can only speculate on this point, but he may even have been willing to repay what he had lost (Luke 19:8; Leviticus 6:4-5). Regardless of the motivation, it demonstrates a true humility and true repentance, not based on what he said but on what he was willing to do and eventually acted upon (Acts 26:20). He realizes he had no right to claim a blessing upon return to his father's household, nor does he have anything to offer, except a life of service, in repentance of his previous actions. With that, he is prepared to fall at his father's feet and hope for forgiveness and mercy. This is exactly what conversion is all about: ending a life of slavery to sin through confession to the Father and faith in Jesus Christ and becoming a slave to righteousness, offering one's body as a living sacrifice (1 John 1:9; Romans 6:6-18; 12:1).

Jesus portrays the father as waiting for his son, perhaps daily searching the distant road, hoping for his appearance. The father notices him while he was still a long way off. The father's compassion assumes some knowledge of the son's pitiful state, possibly from reports sent home. During that time it was not the custom of men to run, yet the father runs to greet his son (vs.20). Why would he break convention for this wayward child who had sinned

against him? The obvious answer is because he loved him and was eager to show him that love and restore the relationship. When the father reaches his son, not only does he throw his arms around him, but he also greets him with a kiss of love (1 Peter 5:14). He is so filled with joy at his son's return that he doesn't even let him finish his confession. Nor does he question or lecture him; instead, he unconditionally forgives him and accepts him back into fellowship. The father running to his son, greeting him with a kiss and ordering the celebration is a picture of how our Heavenly Father feels towards sinners who repent. God greatly loves us, patiently waits for us to repent so he can show us His great mercy, because he does not want any to perish nor escape as though by the fire (Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:15).

This prodigal son was satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight is restored back into the full privilege of being his father's son. He had been transformed from a state of destitution to complete restoration. That is what God's grace does for a penitent sinner (Psalm 40:2; 103:4). Not only are we forgiven, but we receive a spirit of sonship as His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, of His incomparable riches (Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 1:18-19). The father then orders the servants to bring the best robe, no doubt one of his own (a sign of dignity and honor, proof of the prodigal's acceptance back into the family), a ring for the son's hand (a sign of authority and sonship) and sandals for his feet (a sign of not being a servant, as servants did not wear shoes—or, for that matter, rings or expensive clothing, vs.22). All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption (Ephesians 1:5), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness (Ephesians 6:15). A fattened calf is prepared, and a party is held (notice that blood was shed = atonement for sin, Hebrews 9:22). Fatted calves in those times were saved for special occasions such as the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32). This was not just any party; it was a rare and complete celebration. Had the boy been dealt with according to the Law, there would have been a funeral, not a celebration. "The Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." (Psalm 103:10-13). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who had been dead but now is alive, who once was lost but now is found (Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Note the parallel between "dead" and "alive" and "lost" and "found"—terms that also apply to one's state before and after conversion to Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). This is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15: 7, 10).

Now to the final and tragic character in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the oldest son, who, once again, illustrates the Pharisees and the scribes. Outwardly they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable (Matthew 23:25-28). This was true of the older son who worked hard, obeyed his father, and brought no disgrace to his family or townspeople. It is obvious by his words and actions, upon his brothers return, that he is not showing love for

his father or brother. One of the duties of the eldest son would have included reconciliation between the father and his son. He would have been the host at the feast to celebrate his brother's return. Yet he remains in the field instead of in the house where he should have been. This act alone would have brought public disgrace upon the father. Still, the father, with great patience, goes to his angry and hurting son. He does not rebuke him as his actions and disrespectful address of his father warrant (vs.29, "Look," he says, instead of addressing him as "father" or "my lord"), nor does his compassion cease as he listens to his complaints and criticisms. The boy appeals to his father's righteousness by proudly proclaiming his own self-righteousness in comparison to his brother's sinfulness (Matthew 7:3-5). By saying, "This son of yours," the older brother avoids acknowledging that the prodigal is his own brother (vs. 30). Just like the Pharisees, the older brother was defining sin by outward actions, not inward attitudes (Luke 18:9-14). In essence, the older brother is saying that he was the one worthy of the celebration, and his father had been ungrateful for all his work. Now the one who had squandered his wealth was getting what he, the older son, deserved. The father tenderly addresses his oldest as "my son" (vs. 31) and corrects the error in his thinking by referring to the prodigal son as "this brother of yours" (vs. 32). The father's response, "We had to celebrate," suggests that the elder brother should have joined in the celebration, as there seems to be a sense of urgency in not postponing the celebration of the brother's return.

The older brother's focus was on himself, and as a result there is no joy in his brother's arrival home. He is so consumed with issues of justice and equity that he fails to see the value of his brother's repentance and return. He fails to realize that "anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him" (1 John 2:9-11). The older brother allows anger to take root in his heart to the point that he is unable to show compassion towards his brother, and, for that matter he is unable to forgive the perceived sin of his father against him (Genesis 4:5-8). He prefers to nurse his anger rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother and the community. He chooses suffering and isolation over restoration and reconciliation (Matthew 5:24, 6:14-15). He sees his brother's return as a threat to his own inheritance. After all, why should he have to share his portion with a brother who has squandered his? And why hadn't his father rejoiced in his presence through his faithful years of service?

The wise father seeks to bring restoration by pointing out that all he has is and has always been available for the asking to his obedient son, as it was his portion of the inheritance since the time of the allotment. The older son never utilized the blessings at his disposal (Galatians 5:22; 2 Peter 1:5-8). This is similar to the Pharisees with their religion of good works. They hoped to earn blessings from God and in their obedience merit eternal life (Romans 9:31-33; 10:3). They failed to understand the grace of God and failed to comprehend the meaning of forgiveness. It was, therefore, not what they did that became a stumbling block to their growth but rather what they did not do which alienated them from God (Matthew 23:23-24, Romans 10:4). They were irate when Jesus was receiving and forgiving "unholy" people, failing to see their own need for a Savior. We do not know how this story ended for the oldest

son, but we do know that the Pharisees continued to oppose Jesus and separate themselves from His followers. Despite the father's pleading for them to "come in," they refused and were the ones who instigated the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:59). A tragic ending to a story filled with such hope, mercy, joy, and forgiveness.

The picture of the father receiving the son back into relationship is a picture of how we should respond to repentant sinners as well (1 John 4:20-21; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are included in that "all," and we must remember that "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" apart from Christ (Isaiah 64:6; John 15:1-6). It is only by God's grace that we are saved, not by works that we may boast of (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 9:16; Psalm 51:5). That is the core message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

The **Parable of the Faithful Servant** (or Parable of the Door Keeper) is a parable of Jesus found in three out of the four Canonical gospels in the New Testament. According to Matthew 24:42-51, Mark 13:34-37, and Luke 12:35-48 — often called the Synoptic Gospels — it is important for the faithful to keep watch.

The parable is a continuance on Christ's readiness theme that he introduced in verses **42** through **44** and His prior parable on the structure and administration of the millennial kingdom regarding the wedding guests/feast (**Matthew 22:1-14**). In the parable of the wedding guests/feast the focus was on the chosen, those who were selected out of the "called." In this parable the focus is on the faithful and wise, which are those that are selected out of the chosen (**Revelation 17:14b**).

Some expositors see a division of two ranks among those that are selected out of the chosen, the highest rank being those that are faithful and wise and the next highest rank being those that are good and faithful (as seen in the parable of the talents in **Matthew 25:14-30**). This writer is not prepared to make such an assertion; although, it is entirely possible. If so, this parable refers to the highest rank of those who will reign along with Christ and most likely will carry the title of "bride of Christ," along with those who are good and faithful that will rule just under them.

The parable begins with a question: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" By it Christ outlines the essential character of those who will occupy the highest rank in and during His millennial reign upon earth, the kingdom of heaven.

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But it must be reiterated that Christ is speaking privately to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and His remarks are not to those who are eternally lost (**Matthew 24:3, 4**). Here in this parable He is outlining the structure and administration of His coming reign upon the

earth—the millennial kingdom. In this case He is defining the Bride of Christ who will reign alongside of Him during that time.

The two characteristics of the children of God (saved individuals) who will occupy this lofty position alongside of Christ during the kingdom of heaven are as follow:

1. Faithfulness

They will be believers who have been truly faithful in their comportment since their salvation and until their physical death or their rapture, whichever comes first. The word translated faithful is the Greek word *pistos* and comes from the root Greek word *peitho*, which means “worthy of belief, trust, or confidence.” It speaks of a person who is trustworthy and consistent in the performance of his duty to God and to others.

It is important to realize that God’s grace-gift of “spirit” salvation and His grace-provision of “soul” life that is provided for all to receive and experience is based on faith, which entails a mutual confidence or trust between God and man. Mankind can only be spiritually saved (appropriate eternal life) through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from any self-effort (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**).

He may also live or walk in Christ, but only in the same manner, i.e., trusting Christ to live through him and apart from any self-effort (**Colossians 2:6**). And when he fails, as all of God’s children will do (**1 John 1:8**), he only needs to name or own up to his sin. God then instantly forgives such sin and cleanses him completely, which reestablishes the control (filling) of the Holy Spirit’s influence in his life (**1 John 1:9; Ephesians 5:18**). Whereas “spirit salvation” is “positional” and “final” and speaks to the believer’s just and eternal standing before God; “soul salvation” (also known as the “sanctified process”) is experiential and continues in a state of flux during life, which speaks to a believer’s state as a child before God his Father. The first is obtained solely by faith; the second is empowered by faith but must include divine (not human) good works.

The apostle Paul had the key. He spoke elegantly and lucidly regarding the faithful Christian life when in **Galatians 2:20** he said:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (**Galatians 2:20**)

The word translated “faith” in Paul’s expression of the faithful Christian life also comes from the Greek root word *peitho*, which only emphasizes that God’s gift of life, both its inception and its eternal continuance stems from a deep and abiding trust in Him and His Word.

The Old Testament conveyed the same message:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

(Proverbs 3:5, 6)

2. Wisdom

They will be believers who will be wise in their comportment since their salvation and until their physical death or their rapture, whichever comes first. The word “wise” here is the Greek word *phronimos*, which comes from the Greek root word *phroneo* meaning “to think or have a mindset.” The activity represented by this word involves the “soul” (a person’s will, affections, and conscience); a word that always refers to a person’s “life.”

Wisdom from God is to be prized above all earthly gain (**Proverbs 3:13, 14; 8:11**) and can only be appropriated by the study and comprehension of God’s Word. This is the message conveyed to Timothy by the apostle Paul:

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (**2 Timothy 3:15**)

The consumption of (study and belief in) God’s Word, which is the meaning of “eating the flesh of Christ”—the Bread of Life—as metaphorically portrayed by Christ in **John 6:48-58**, was a concept the Jews could not understand. Only by achieving a full and detailed knowledge of God’s Word can a believer gain true divine wisdom, which is centered exclusively in and on the Son of God:

Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (**1 Corinthians 1:24b**)

Which He [Christ] made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. (**Ephesians 1:8**)

In whom [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (**Colossians 2:3**)

But the faithful and wise servant (believer) not only must gain divine wisdom through the consumption of God’s Word, he must also share it with others. This is made quite plain in the parable by the words: “whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season.” This is in fact the clarification of the believer’s

mission while here on earth, which is expressed by what is known as the “Great Commission,” as follows:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (**Matthew 28:19, 20**)

It is unfortunate that this “mission statement” by Christ to all His followers is often misunderstood. It certainly involves the bringing of the lost to a salvation experience by faith alone in Christ alone, thereby establishing them as children of God; but, it does not stop there! Believers are to make disciples of those who are saved! They are to teach them all things that Christ has commanded. This aspect of their mission is critical and binding!

Christ defines a disciple in and by His vine-metaphor in **John 15:1-8**, in which he explains that believers should go beyond mere salvation by “abiding” in (i.e., drawing divine power from) Him (**Colossians 2:6; Galatians 2:20**) so that they may produce truly divine good works, which then establishes them as His disciples. Later in the chapter He designates them also as His friends.

Here again in this portion of **John** most often the passage is interpreted within the framework of being “lost or saved,” which is not the case. It is speaking only about living the Christian life in the only manner that will please God.

Its application to making disciples as in the “Great Commission” is important. The faithful and wise servant, the believer who will be included in the company who will be known as the Bride of Christ and who will reign alongside of Christ in the millennial kingdom. These will be those who not only consumed the “solid food” (“meat;” not just the “milk”) of God’s Word (**Hebrews 5:12, 14**) but actively shared it with other believers in order that they too could become fortified and productive in the creation of divine good works.

It seems that most modern day pastors are trained in the seminaries to become “professional” ministers, and as such never have much of an interest in learning the Word of God. So, it is here, just before the coming of the Lord, that Jesus is looking for faithful and wise pastors and Bible teachers who are able to give” meat,” whom He can place over His households. Whom will He find and appoint as a faithful steward (Luke 12:42)? The professional, twentieth century pastor will not qualify. He only knows “milk.” In fact, he doesn’t even seem to know that we are living in the “due season,” which is the time just before the return of the Lord. It is no wonder that our Lord puts this in a question form. Who is wise? Who is faithful? Who will give meat?

Christ then states in verse **46** that at the master's [read Christ] return and He finds the steward who is faithful and wise, the one who teaches the "meat" (solid food) of His Word, He will make him "ruler over all his goods." Luke records this as "ruler over all that He has" (**Luke 12:44**).

In Luke's gospel, we read that the "wise and faithful" are called "stewards." Contrary to the popular use of this word in the modern church, people who give their time and money are not known scripturally as stewards, even though they have been faithful in what God has told them to do. The word "steward" in the Greek is "oikonomos," which means a house-distributor, manager or overseer of the "mysteries" of God, i.e. to faithfully distribute to God's household, the mysteries or "meat" of the Word (kingdom truths) of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Along with this, the scriptures record that it is required that a steward be "faithful" in this task (1 Cor. 4:2). (Shock & Surprise Beyond the Rapture by Gary T. Whipple, Th.M., Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 2003)

And finally Christ explains what will happen to the believer who is designated as "evil" and who not only fails to rise to the heights of the faithful and wise, but who in fact becomes completely carnal in his Christian life and testimony. The word translated "evil" comes from the Greek word kakos, which is best translated "worthless externally." When used of a soldier it meant one who was "cowardly." Overall it is one who is "bad in heart, conduct, and character."

Unfortunately there are ample passages of Scripture that clearly indicate that believers (Christians) can succumb to a carnal state, even to the point of denying their faith. When this occurs God brings forth discipline, as a Father toward His children. And the severity of this discipline may take on varying degrees, even to the point of premature physical death.

And should the child of God continue in this condition up until the coming of Christ, he will certainly appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**) and he will be subject to loss of rewards (the meaning of "cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites"—**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**) and tremendous anguish (the meaning of "weeping and gnashing of teeth").

The expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" has no application to eternal hell (lake of fire). Although this is often assumed by many commentators, there is no support for this application in Scripture. It was a common Jewish expression signifying immense grief. And this condition for the carnal servant will prevail throughout the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, only to eventually be removed at its end (**Revelation 21:4**).

This parable is not meant to portray the saved from the lost. It has everything to do with the believer's conduct while here on earth. It defines who will achieve the highest state of rulership beside Christ during the millennial kingdom—the faithful and wise.

Jesus told the Parable of the Fig Tree—Luke 13:6-9—immediately after reminding His listeners of a tower over the pool of Siloam (John 9:7) which unexpectedly fell and killed eighteen people. The moral of that story is found in Luke 13:3: “Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.” To reiterate this moral, Jesus tells the story of the fig tree, the vineyard owner, and the gardener who took care of the vineyard. The three entities in the story all have clear symbolic significance. The vineyard owner represents God, the one who rightly expects to see fruit on His tree and who justly decides to destroy it when He finds none. The gardener, or vineyard keeper who cares for the trees, watering and fertilizing them to bring them to their peak of fruitfulness, represents Jesus, who feeds His people and gives them living water. The tree itself has two symbolic meanings: the nation of Israel and the individual. As the story unfolds, we see the vineyard owner expressing his disappointment at the fruitless tree. He has looked for fruit for three years from this tree, but has found none. The three-year period is significant because for three years John the Baptist and Jesus had been preaching the message of repentance throughout Israel. But the fruits of repentance were not forthcoming. John the Baptist warned the people about the Messiah coming and told them to bring forth fruits fit for repentance because the ax was already laid at the root of the tree (Luke 3:8-9). But the Jews were offended by the idea they needed to repent, and they rejected their Messiah because He demanded repentance from them. After all, they had the revelation of God, the prophets, the Scriptures, the covenants, and the adoption (Romans 9:4-5). They had it all, but they were already apostate. They had departed from the true faith and the true and living God and created a system of works-righteousness that was an abomination to God. He, as the vineyard owner, was perfectly justified in tearing down the tree that had no fruit. The Lord’s ax was already poised over the root of the tree, and it was ready to fall.

However, we see the gardener pleading here for a little more time. There were a few months before the crucifixion, and more miracles to come, especially the incredible miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which would astound many and perhaps cause the Jews to repent. As it turned out, Israel as a nation still did not believe, but individuals certainly did (John 12:10-11). The compassionate gardener intercedes for more time to water and fertilize the fruitless tree, and the gracious Lord of the vineyard responds in patience.

The lesson for the individual is that borrowed time is not permanent. God’s patience has a limit. In the parable, the vineyard owner grants another year of life to the tree. In the same way, God in His mercy grants us another day, another hour, another breath. Christ stands at the door of each man’s heart knocking and seeking to gain entrance and requiring repentance from sin. But if there is no fruit, no repentance, His patience will come to an end, and the fruitless, unrepentant individual will be cut down. We all live on borrowed time; judgment is near. That is why the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

When God calls us, we may take our newly found power of faith for granted and may be increasingly susceptible to becoming angry at offenses and persecution. Aware of this, Jesus sought to caution His apostles against such pitfalls. In Luke 17:1-6, Jesus sets up the Parable

of the Unprofitable Servants with introductory instruction. He warns His disciples of the inevitable attacks on His teaching and on those who proclaim it, pointing out the guilt of those responsible (verses 1-2). Then He admonishes them to value a loving and forgiving attitude and to be ready to pardon when an offender repents. Knowing this is difficult and seeing this weakness in themselves, the apostles feel the need for an increase of faith, an additional amount of spiritual help to aid them in complying with Jesus' requirements.

The lesson in verses 1-6 unites with the parable in verses 7-10, which emphasizes the obligation of each disciple to serve the Master without expectation of release or reward. His followers must give complete obedience to Him no matter what trials come upon them and like Him, they must conquer their own human nature by suffering. Jesus emphasizes the kind of faith His disciples would need to endure coming trials and to obey His commands (I Timothy 1:5). This parable is designed to guard against the subtle danger in the servant who becomes satisfied with his work and expects that the Master will recognize his service with reward. Jesus impresses on His disciples the difficult and continuous service He requires of them and the attitude in which their service should be given.

1. Would it be enough for Jesus merely to increase their faith as His apostles asked? Luke 17:5.

Comment: The apostles wanted more faith so they could meet the challenges of God's demands, but Jesus knew that it was not quantity they needed but quality. They did not need an increase of faith that would bring some reward following its use, but a faith that, although small like a mustard seed, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). The disciple with this type of living faith is convinced of the fact that God exists (Romans 4:16-22; Hebrews 11:1-3), conscious of his intimate relationship with God (Romans 5:1-2), and concerned about absolute submission to His will (Romans 12:2).

2. As servants, do we have to be subject to God in everything? Luke 17:7.

Comment: As servants or bondservants, we are not our own. We belong to Christ who bought us with His blood. We have no right of ownership of anything because God owns us and all we have—even our time. This means we are at His disposal. He demands our total effort at all times, and has every right to expect it as He has given all, owns all, and has a right to all. We are His by creation, by redemption, and by our surrender of our lives to Him.

The images of plowing fields and tending sheep in verse 7 represent spiritual labor, to which Christ called His own followers (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3). A master is not required to refresh or compensate his servant immediately, even when he has plowed his master's fields or fed his sheep. The servant has merely done his duty. Before the servant can sit down and rest, he must prepare and serve his master's meal. Though tired, he is still under obligation to serve.

3. How much effort must be made for the Master? Luke 17:8.

Comment: From the master's point of view, all the servant had already accomplished was a matter of obligation, and now he demands further obedience and additional service from him. His needs must be satisfied first, and then at the proper time, the servant may eat. This represents our work on earth on our Master's behalf, giving Him the spiritual food and drink of seeing His Father's will accomplished (John 4:32-34). We are under obligation to Christ, and without delay and rest, we must present ourselves completely to Him in service (Romans 12:1).

4. Should a servant expect immediate praise or compensation for his obedience and service to the Master? Luke 17:9.

Comment: The only limit to the servant's duty is his master's will. There is no point at which we can claim that we have done enough and are entitled to ease. The servant is always a debtor of service; the master is never a debtor of reward. One who idolizes his duty may be satisfied when his duty is accomplished and expect the praise of others, but servants should not expect even thanks.

God promises us rewards, but we do not work for the Master simply to receive compensation. As servants, we serve Him because we are His to command as He wills and because we love Him. He has every right to our service and is under no obligation to thank us for our obedience. The servant does not serve for nothing, but receives consideration for the gift of salvation because of his dedicated obedience and humble service. Nevertheless, it is good for His servants to seek His praises and rewards with the right attitude because God does praise and reward the faithful (Colossians 3:23-24).

5. After serving the master, why is the servant still unprofitable? What is expected of us? Luke 17:10.

Comment: The lowly attitude of the servant is seen clearly in the word translated "servant" in verse 7. It is the Greek word *doulos* meaning "bondservant." During Christ's time, such a servant-slave was under the complete authority of his master. We must take this lowly position if we are going to serve our Master well. Our service will always fall short of the suffering and sacrifice Jesus received while in the flesh on earth. Therefore, there is no such thing as an excess of earned credit in us; even after serving our best at what the Master requires, we are still unprofitable servants in comparison to Christ. After performing our duty perfectly, we are still short of earned credit before God. We cannot build anything on our own effort. If we expect thanks and reward for fulfilling the minimum requirement of work, our thoughts are not on the duty but on what we may gain.

Christ expects every church member to do his duty in a mind and will unified with His. His emphasis on humility is a hard lesson for those who will not serve unless given recognition, honor, and position. In reality, much of the service we perform for Him is humbling and obscure by the world's standard. Christian works must be done in faith (James 2:20). The only way to obtain increased faith is for the working servant to manifest steadfast,

persevering obedience, grounded in humility with the help of the Holy Spirit. Faith is produced as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). A humble, obedient, serving attitude goes a long way to increasing faith and practicing true forgiveness

IV. The pedagogical advantages of parables

As we have seen, parables are a very specific form of teaching, using the advantages of mimesis, the literary and artistic imitation or representation of reality.

As a hermeneutical concept, mimesis through parables is the heir of a long and rich history. At its most basic level, mimesis is the mental ability that allows us to imitate or to represent someone or something in our actions, speech, art or literature, which is the essence of any artistic or literary creation.

Among the diverse forms and methods of teaching available to the educator, the parable has the advantage of appealing, – because of its mimetic nature – both to normal human curiosity and to fascination with fiction. We all like stories.

For a long time, parables were considered as a lower form of teaching, obviously inferior to all the other categories of teaching by analysis, reasoning and deduction. But today the trend has changed, and parables are considered a very intelligent and privileged form of teaching. These are some of the main reasons invoked in favour of parables:

1. Simple forms may convey deep wisdom

In the past many thought that the parable was a primitive form of discourse. Today however, the best scholars affirm just the opposite. They acknowledge that parables may be superior forms of teaching, much more effective than most of the other ways of conveying a message.

2. The known leads to the unknown

The most common way to learn goes from the known to the unknown. Through the all too familiar realities of life – the uncertainty of a harvest, the anguish of a loss, and the burden of a debt – Jesus's parables lead the listeners to the unknown and surprising realities of the spiritual life: God takes care of his creatures, he suffers with his lost children, he is a forgiving father, etc.

3. The concrete leads to understanding of the abstract

The more abstract an idea is, the more it is difficult to formulate. Apparently research shows that the vast majority of people think anecdotically, not abstractly. Great creativity is needed to formulate images capable of communicating abstractions so that they are easily understood by those who receive them. The parables succeed in achieving this in a remarkable way. For example, to explain what Jesus calls "The kingdom of God", He shows in which way God wants to be king of our lives: He is not going to impose His kingdom by force like a Roman general (as some expected from the Messiah); He is going to propose it (as Jesus is doing with his teaching), like the sower who sows seeds in his field.

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4. Parables are "never-ending" stories

Because of the mimetic and artistic character of parables, they may be read and reread endlessly, with new insights and ever-renewed benefits for the reader, because of the changing character of personal experience. For there will never be any "last word" about

the meaning of a mimetic representation in a text or a work of art. "Every encounter with a work of art is part of the still unfinished happening of the work itself because of the way we recognize more than we knew previously".

These reasons support the idea that parables were an important educational tool used by Jesus in the transmission of faith.

Teaching through parables

Is it possible, appropriate and convenient to teach through parables today? In the light of what has been said, a positive answer seems obvious. As every teacher knows, it is becoming more and more difficult to compete for students' attention. How can teachers compete with the ever-present effects of the media? "Which strategies will capture the minds of the students reliving Rocky IV violence or fantasizing about an illicit relationship? Unfortunately, the glorious truths of the Scriptures fail to grasp the attention, ignite the imagination, or relate to the needs of far too many students.

Young people in this generation "process information in narrative images. One way to make Bible truths come alive for students is to present them indirectly through parables. Because our intention is that the students – listeners and readers of our parabolic message – do more than merely understand an idea; we would like them to respond imaginatively and emotionally, that is, with commitment, to a real-life, or even a transcendent experience.

The advantage of the parable over other types of teaching, is that it is by nature playful and affective, not cool and detached. The parable plays with the natural curiosity of every human being, and opens the listener to the story told on occasions when a direct, propositional statement would be rejected. This is the reason why Nathan used a parable to convince king David of his terrible sin with powerful results (2 Samuel 12:1-7), and this is certainly why Jesus used parables so effectively. His "parables often drew his listeners innocently into the story and then turned the tables on them after it was too late to evade the issue at hand.

One of the main obstacles that some Adventist teachers may face, when considering the creation or the use of parables for their own teaching, comes from the traditional reluctance of some to deal with whatever may be called "fiction". Although Ellen G. White admits that some of these works of fiction, "written with the purpose of teaching truth (...) have accomplished good", her general warning is against this type of reading.

However, we are convinced that the statements of Ellen White against fiction are not ontological but epistemological in orientation. That is to say, she does not oppose the genre, but the content of most works of fiction. This is why she may be very positive about some pieces of pure fiction such as *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, while rejecting fiction in general. When she opposes "truth" to "fiction" she does not identify truth with "factual" and fiction with "non factual" reality. For her "fiction" equates with "error". So when she states that "we must teach truth, nor error or fiction" she does not speak of a literary form.¹ In the minds of many of her contemporaries the term fiction denoted the perverted, "harmful form of imaginative writings often designed to exalt sin and sordidness.

E. G. White would certainly agree that "a piece of literature is not good or bad because it falls in a certain category in classification of its form. Pilgrim's Progress and Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, are fiction from a literary point of view, while they are "true" from the view point of their religious and spiritual intention. Imaginative forms of literature are not evil per se, and therefore, the Bible does not hesitate to use them. And this is why Ellen White was able to clip articles and stories for the Sabbath Reading for the Home Circle (1905), that are pure fiction according to a general literary definition. Her warnings against fiction do not apply to the type of stories which she included in her anthology for youth, because, according to her definition of fiction, the stories selected for her collection "were true to life, to probity, to honor, to virtue" although were not "all factual accounts of actual happenings". For truth versus error is a more reliable basis of choice than fact versus fiction."

The parables of Jesus have been crafted in such a creative way that the medium and the message are inseparable. In these parables, like in other parts of the Bible, the medium serves the message but cannot be separated of it.

We can say, therefore with John Jay Hughes, that in a certain sense, "Jesus' parables are works of fiction. That is, they are made up stories. Like many fictional works, they reflect actual incidents or experiences. The story of the woman searching for her lost coin, and when she found it throwing a party that possibly cost more than the coin she has just recovered, may have originated in an incident from Jesus' youth. The story of the Good Samaritan may have been inspired by an actual mugging on the dangerous road between Jerusalem and Jericho. The truth of the stories does not depend, however, on their having actually happened. Jesus' parables are good examples of how fictional, made-up stories can convey profound truth".

What makes, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan great literature? "Everything about it: its experiential approach to truth, its sensory concreteness, its narrative genre, its carefully crafted construction, and its total involvement of the reader-intellectually, emotionally, imaginatively."^{iii[33]} If parables were a suitable tool for Jesus, they may be also a useful tool for educators today.

VI. Educational values better transmitted through parables

Although parables may be useful for teaching many subjects, we find that they are particularly fitted for transmitting spiritual and moral values. This makes them especially suitable for Bible courses.

I have used the "parabolic" approach with success, teaching Bible in high school classes, and have observed and listed several advantages of this method:

1. Working with parables helps to awaken creativity, the appreciation of artistic skills, and the capacity to relate ideals and dreams to the reality of everyday life. The parabolic genre helps to bring together reason and imagination, because it is, at the same time, truth and mask, fiction and reality, because a person's world view consists of images and symbols as well as ideas and propositions.

2. The study of parables helps to develop mental agility (thinking by analogy), and the pleasure of searching and finding deeper meaning beyond the surface of appearance.
3. "Parables are a magnificent example of rationality and demand the best intellectual involvement, both in the telling and the hearing."^{36iv[37]}
4. Reflection on parables helps to develop the capacity of synthesis and analysis.
5. Exposure to parable appeals to the enjoyment of the child in us.

Artistic skills serve "the purpose of intensifying the impact of what is said, but also the purposes of pleasure, delight and enjoyment."^{1]}

6. The study of parables by groups helps to develop dialogue skills and the capacity of listening and learning from other sensibilities.
7. The analysis of parables leads to truth from unexpected perspectives.
8. Teaching through parables, the teacher may transmit values, and help the students to grasp truth in an easier, self-evident way, without imposing anything.

In fact, "By expressing what we believe in the language of what we know, we confirm both our beliefs and our knowledge."

Now the question that comes to mind is how to integrate in a practical way faith and learning through parables in our personal and concrete teaching ministry.

Suggested activities for working on parables

We have worked successfully with parables, with high school students, in the Bible class. Here are some suggestions based on personal and professional experience:

1. The most immediate way to work with parables is probably to find one that conveys the message that we would like to share for a certain lesson, and just tell it to the students at the right moment. But there are also many other possibilities.
2. Another option is to ask the students to read a given parable carefully and re-write it by changing some details in order to make the setting more contemporary, while keeping the structure and the message of the text as it is stated in the Bible.
 - Adapt, for example, the parable of the Ten Virgins to a contemporary setting, looking for what would replace the oil and lamps today.
 - Take the 23rd Psalm and change all the imagery from the shepherd to a mountain guide, etc.
3. It is always useful to challenge the students to summarize the message of the parable in one or two short sentences.
4. A more creative activity would be to retell the parable for people of a certain targeted age or social group (children, teenagers, secularized, rich, migrants, farmers, etc).
5. With more means and time, working in groups, try role-playing the parable (for theater, TV, etc.).
6. Challenge the students by groups to mime or enact the parable without words.
7. Illustrate the message of the parable through news and pictures from the newspapers.

8. Compare the scenario of the parable with similar situations today, taking note of the similarities and the differences.
9. Ask the students to compare themselves with the different characters of the parable and say how they would have acted in a similar situation.
10. Apply the parable to the reality in which the students live (politics, school, family, friends, church, etc).
11. Create modern parables that Jesus could have formulated if he had lived in our time.
12. Reflect on a given modern parable, according to a set of guidelines given.

It would seem that our ability to recognize lateral, logic-based illustrative situations is not impaired, even though we are no longer in the habit of turning them into stories to tell to our students. Our difficulties in achieving a certain linguistic sophistication mean that something rather special has disappeared from our culture. Let us hope that this is only a temporary loss and that we will find new illustrative means of helping our students "to see things to which we have allowed ourselves to become blind.

In order to get started right away, with a practical example, let's listen to a modern parable:

TRUTH AND PARABLE

Once upon a time, Truth came to this world. She had the mission to teach human kind about the reality of all things. This was a very heavy task.

In order to fulfil her task, Truth tried to speak to the people she found, but some abused her, others hid from her and the rest rejected her...

- Why do they treat me so badly? She cried in a corner.

Parable heard Truth crying and said to her:

- They reject you because they are afraid of you, for you are naked. As you see, here everybody wears clothing. Dress yourself and the people will listen to you.

- How shall I dress myself if I do not have any clothes?

- Don't worry, said Parable. You are beautiful and I am a very good tailor. I will make all the clothes you will need.

And since Truth married Parable and now wears the clothes he prepares for her, many people listen, and Truth continues to fulfil her mission.

(Adapted from Kalil Gibran)

UNIT V

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. FORMS OF CONTEMPORARY GOVERNMENT CHAPTER 7

i. Define the characteristics of a modern nation state and illustrate them from Zambia, stating who has more power, who has less power, who decided laws and policies and how citizenship is obtained. Explain the meaning of the phrase “the kingdom of God”.

ii. Illustrate from the Gospels the following teachings about the Kingdom of God.

Contrast the characteristics of God’s Kingdom with the characteristics of modern nation states. -

iii. show how Christians in Zambia today can show that God’s Kingdom is the most important thing in their lives. –

iv. compare the central ideas of Zambian Humanism, traditional Zambian belief, Hinduism and Islam with the Kingdom of God as the central idea of Christianity

There are two main types of government. These are democratic and dictatorial governments. In every community there is a need to have leaders to guide the rest. It is up to each country to choose which form of government to adopt, though in a dictatorial state, the citizens may not have much say.

- **Democracy.** The word “democracy” means “rule by the people”. It **has** been referred to as: government of the people, by the people, for the **people**.

- **Democracy: Definition and Origin**

- The concept of Democracy is traceable to the ancient Greeks and specifically the city-state of Athens in the fifth century B.C. The word democracy is derived from the Greek words ‘demos’, meaning people, and ‘Kratos’ meaning power or rule. Directly translated, democracy therefore means ‘rule by the people’, although originally the Greeks used it to mean the poor or the masses. Periclean Athens, named after its most celebrated leader, has inspired generations of later political theorists, statesmen, and common people alike. Yet many aspects of Athenian democracy appear strange and unfamiliar to modern eyes. The central political institution in

- Athens during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. was the Assembly, usually composed of 5,000 to 6,000 members and open to all adult citizens with the exception of women, slaves and foreigners. By simple majority vote, the Assembly could decide on virtually any domestic issue without any legal restrictions. Most remarkable, perhaps, was the fact that the leaders of the Athenian Assembly were not elected, but chosen by lot, as the Athenians believed that any citizen was capable of holding public office.¹

- The problem with democracy has been its very popularity, a popularity that has threatened the term’s undoing as a meaningful political concept. In being almost universally regarded as a ‘good thing’, democracy has come to be used as a little more than a ‘hurray! word’, implying approval of a particular set of ideas or system or rule. In the words of Bernard Crick (1993), ‘democracy is perhaps the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs’². A term that can mean anything to anyone is in danger of meaning nothing at all.

- Below are some of the meanings that have been associated with the concept of democracy:

- A system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged;

- A form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the need for professional politicians or public officials;

- A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy or privilege;
- A system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities;
- A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule;
- A system of rule that protects the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority;
- A means of filling public offices through a competitive struggle for the popular vote;
- A system of government that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political office.
- A working definition for democracy in this paper will be ‘a form of government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens, directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives’³.
- **Main Characteristics and Features of Democracy**
- Democracy is more than just a set of specific government institutions; it rests upon a well understood group of values, attitudes, and practices – all of which may take different forms and expressions among different cultures and societies around the world.
- Below are some core democratic characteristics:
- Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives.
- Democracy rests upon the principle of majority rule, which means that decisions are made by majority and have to be accepted by all, but minority viewpoints are respected and protected.
- Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and decentralise government to regional and local levels, understanding that all levels of government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.
- Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under the law; and the opportunity to organise and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.
- Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens of voting age.
- Citizens in a democracy have not only rights, but also the responsibility to participate in political systems that, in turn, protect their rights and freedoms.
- Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise.
- **Types of Democracy**
- Democracies fall into two basic categories, i.e. direct/participatory and representativedemocracy.
- In **direct democracy**, citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Direct democracy thus reduces the distinction between government and the governed and between the state

and civil society; it is a system of popular self-government. Its most common manifestation in the modern era is the use of referenda. Direct democracy is most clearly practicable with relatively small numbers of people – in a community Organisation, tribal council, or the local unit of a labor union, for example – where

- members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote.

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- However, today, as in the past, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town of 50,000 or a nation of 50 million people, is **representative democracy**, in which the citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programmes for the public good. This type of democracy is limited and indirect. It is limited in the sense that popular participation in government is infrequent and brief, being restricted to the act of voting every few years. It is indirect in that the public do not exercise power themselves; they merely select

- those who will rule on their behalf. This form of rule is democratic only insofar as representation establishes a reliable and effective link between the government and the governed.

- **Principles of Modern Democratic Rule**

- These are sometimes referred to as the pillars, tenets, or principles of democratic rule. They differentiate democratic rule from any other types of government. Any democracy around the world can be evaluated on the basis of these principles. They include:

- **Citizen participation:** This means that citizens are part and parcel of what happens in their society or country. The citizens are part of the decision-making process on matters that affect them. Communication is a two-way consultative process, i.e. bottom-up as well as top-bottom before any decision is reached.

- **Equality:** This means equality before the law, equality of opportunity in the realisation of individual capacities without regard to one's race, gender, ethnic background, religion or whatsoever.

- **Political tolerance:** This means the ruling masses are mindful and respectful of the interests of the minority. While there may be differences between the people by way of race, religion, descent and culture they rise above such differences and give room for discussion, debate and

- accommodation of different viewpoints.

- **Accountability:** This is when elected leaders or public officials have to answer to the common citizens regarding their actions, decisions or indecisions during the time they are or were occupants of the public offices. Those found to be performing to the required standards are rewarded by their continued stay in office while those found to be lacking in one way or

- another are punished. 174

- **Transparency:** To be transparent means that leaders allow for public scrutiny of what they do while in public office. The citizens are allowed to attend public meetings and are free to obtain information on what happens in public offices, who makes what decisions and why. Transparency is a step towards accountability.

- **Regular, free and fair elections:** Regular elections ensure that the citizens are not stuck with bad leadership but that they have the opportunity to throw out incompetent leaders through free and fair elections. Free and fair elections give the citizens a chance to elect a leader of their choice as opposed to rigging elections that return often unwanted leaders to power. Elections are the main avenue for all citizens to exercise power by choosing their leaders and giving their vote to the candidate whom they think will represent them best.
- **Economic freedom:** Economically handicapped citizens are the ones prone to all types of abuses as they lack the economic base to meet the basic necessities of life. As a result they are the ones often bribed with the smallest of gifts during elections, the consequences of which are often adverse, such as returning corrupt and morally bankrupt leaders to power. Economic independence creates the foundation on which the citizens become vibrant and thus able to call their leaders to account for their actions or inaction. In democracies, economic pluralism needs to go hand in hand with political and social pluralism, i.e. the freedom to choose/select one's political leaders and the freedom to belong to one's social/cultural associations, respectively.
- **Control of the abuse of power:** Any government without checks and balances on its powers is likely to abuse those powers. The most common form of abuse of power is corruption by government officials. Control of abuse of power can be achieved through a number of ways, i.e. by way of **separation of powers** of the three arms of government – the legislature, executive and the judiciary – and by ensuring the independence of then three.
- **Bill of rights:** This imposes controls on government powers in a bid to protect the citizens from abuse by heavy-handed leaders. As such, the bill of rights seeks to protect the rights and freedoms of the citizens by way of ensuring that this protection is enshrined in the constitution of a given country.
- **A culture of accepting the results of elections:** Once free and fair elections are held and a winner clearly emerges, the loser of the elections should without resistance evacuate office and hand over the instruments of power to the winner. However, it is also important that once voted into power, the leaders should rule for the benefit of all citizens regardless of the fact that some did not vote for them.
- **Human rights:** Unlike dictatorships, democracies strive to protect the rights and freedoms of their citizens from abuse. These rights include the right to life, the right to own property, the freedom of expression, the freedom to associate, and the freedom to assemble, among others.
- **Multi-party system:** A multiparty system is a set-up where there are more than two political parties contesting for power. The reasons for having multiple parties in a democracy are: to widen the pool for choice of the best candidate for political office; to offer alternative views to the government of the day as a result of the existence of an opposition; and to enable the
 - opposition to act as a check on those in political office. One-party systems lead to a lack of alternatives for the citizens and concentration of powers and have often led to dictatorships.

- **Neutrality of state institutions:** State institutions such as the police and the army should be neutral and not take sides or be politically partisan.
- **Rule of law:** This implies that no one is above the law and requires that all citizens observe the law and are held accountable if they break it. The due process of law requires that the law should be equally, fairly and consistently enforced. The rule of law ensures law and order and the protection of citizens as they enjoy their rights.
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- **Democratic Institutions and Actors**
- The success of democracy in a country is dependent on having strong institutions. These institutions include the three arms of government: the Legislature (Assembly, Parliament), the Executive and the Judiciary.
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- **Assemblies** are respected because they are composed of lay politicians who represent the people rather than by trained public officials. Assemblies are invested with formal law-making power, thus the name **legislators**. Assemblies provide a link between government and the people, a channel of communication that can both support government and help to uphold the regime and force government to respond to public demands and anxieties. The major functions of assemblies are:
 - **Legislation:** As representatives of the people, the legislators are vested with the power to make laws on behalf of the citizens. This makes the laws binding because legislators execute this function on behalf of the people, meaning that the people themselves make their laws. It is in parliament that discussion and debate of proposed laws take place.
 - **Representation:** As noted above, assemblies play a representative role providing a link between government and the people. Because we cannot all sit in parliament, the elected members of parliament thus serve a delegated function.
 - **Scrutiny and oversight:** Greater emphasis has been placed on the ability of assemblies to constrain or check government power. This is what makes assemblies scrutinising bodies whose major function is to deliver responsible and accountable government. It is for the same reason that the concept of checks and balances is used when looking at the three arms of government, especially parliament that has to scrutinise and oversee the activities of the executive and the judiciary.
 - **Recruiting and training:** Assemblies often act as the major channels of recruitment, providing a pool of talent from which leading decision makers emerge. Parliament is a training ground because it is where the lay representatives of the people acquire oratorical skills and learn how
 - to debate and make laws, functions that build their capacity to fill other political offices.
 - **Legitimacy:** Assemblies promote this function by encouraging the public to believe that the system of rule above them is rightful. It is for the same reason that even authoritarian regimes tolerate assemblies.
- **Dictatorship.** This is the type of government where leaders come to power by force,

in most cases, or may refuse to conduct elections after being elected into power.

Dictatorships are some of the most well-known political systems; throughout history, dictators have risen and fallen, often affecting the way the world sees their country at the time. However, if one hasn't really lived in a dictatorship, it's possible you'll have the wrong idea on this type of political systems.

A dictatorship is a form of government in which one person has absolute power, often backed by the military, over the entire country and its people. Quite often, as a way to secure their power and have more control, dictators remove certain rights from people, most of the time trespassing certain human rights.

Dictators can be found throughout history and go as far back as the Roman empire, where the position of dictator was actually a military post and gave such position complete and absolute power over the empire when there were emergencies. This concept slowly started to be applied in different societies until it eventually evolved into the modern concept known today.

Some of the most notable dictators in history are directly related with World War II: Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. While usually on a dictatorship, heads of states seek a single purpose and start doing everything needed to achieve such goal (they start raising taxes, revoking laws, limiting people's rights, etc.), both Hitler and Mussolini used their absolute power to promote their message and keep control of people's opinion.

Usually dictators rise to power as a result from democratic elections, but once they're elected, they change the entire political system to ensure that no one else will remove them from their charge, starting with prohibiting all sorts of opposing organizations or parties, until they eventually cancel free elections or they do hold elections but start tampering the results so it appears that it's the people's will to remain in power. Most of the time, they call themselves "head of state" or "President", trying to maintain the appearance of being a democratically constituted government.

Quite often, if people don't act in accordance to the government's way of thinking, it is considered treason, and a person could be sentenced to jail or even executed for this. In the odd chance that such person was allowed a trial, most of the time it was a mockery, as in the end the sentence would be the same. Modern examples of dictatorship include Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Kim Il-sung in North Korea. Human rights organizations have kept a close watch on governments that start showing usual dictatorship characteristics, to reduce the chance of human rights violations to take place.

2. DICTATORIAL STATES

There are many forms of dictatorial type of governments. Some of which are:¹⁷⁷ This is rule by the army, or one army officer. Leaders come to power by overthrowing the ruling government.

- **Autocracy.** It is a rule by one man or woman, who begins democratically but ends

up a dictator. The leader is initially elected, but later refuses to hold elections, for example: the late Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi.

- An **autocracy** is a system of government in which a supreme power is concentrated in the hands of one person, whose decisions are subject to neither external legal restraints nor regularized mechanisms of popular control (except perhaps for the implicit threat of coup d'état or mass insurrection). An autocracy is an absolute monarchy or dictatorship.

Oligarchy. This describes the rule by a small group, such as a racial grouping in South Africa during the apartheid regime. One ethnic group can also dominate other groups as in the case of Rwanda and Burundi. Moreover, a church or religion can also take control, for example, Sudan.

Oligarchy (from Greek *ὀλιγαρχία* (*oligarkhía*); from *ὀλίγος* (*olígos*), meaning "few", and *ἄρχω* (*arkho*), meaning "to rule or to command") is a form of power structure in which power effectively rests with a small number of people. These people could be distinguished by royalty, wealth, family ties, education, corporate, religious or military control. Such states are often controlled by a few prominent families who typically pass their influence from one generation to the next, but inheritance is not a necessary condition for the application of this term.

Throughout history, oligarchies have often been tyrannical (relying on public obedience and/or oppression to exist). Aristotle pioneered the use of the term as a synonym for rule by the rich, for which the exact term is plutocracy. However, oligarchy is not always rule by the wealthy, as oligarchs can simply be a privileged group, and do not have to be connected by either wealth or by bloodlines – as in a monarchy

Characteristics of a Dictatorial State

In a dictatorial state, the following characteristics are common:

- Power is in the hands of one person or just a few, who make decisions on behalf of the citizens.
- Human rights are often not respected, and the citizens may not be allowed to question what the state is doing.
- Press freedom and freedom of speech is withdrawn.
- Elections are never conducted.
- Police act as watch-dogs to arrest those who criticise the government.
- Courts are not independent, but controlled by the state.

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3. DEMOCRATIC STATE

There are two types of democracy. These are:

Direct Democracy: where the citizens are involved in decision making. This is found in

smaller communities such as in the villages, schools and clubs.

Direct democracy, sometimes called "pure democracy," is a form of democracy in which the people themselves, rather than elected representatives, determine the laws and policies by which they are governed.

Direct democracy is the opposite of the more common "representative democracy," under which the people elect representatives empowered to create laws and policies. Ideally, the laws and policies enacted by the elected representatives in a representative democracy reflect the will of the people.

While the United States practices representative democracy, as embodied in the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures, three forms of limited direct democracy are practiced at the state and local level: ballot initiatives and referendums, and recall of elected officials.

In general, the term "direct democracy" usually refers to **citizens making policy and law decisions in person**, without going through representatives and legislatures. The classic example of this is the New England Town Meeting where anyone from the town who wants to show up to debate and vote on town policy can do so. Until recently, this worked for scores of communities, but low attendance at many modern town meetings has raised questions about whether they are truly democratic.

More recent direct democracy proposals tend to focus on voting schemes (usually high tech) that would allow **widespread, virtually continual voting by millions of citizens** on whatever proposals surfaced. While useful in building up a buffet of voting methodologies for possible use in other contexts, the lack of organized public deliberation about the issues in question makes such proposals look more like opinion polls than exercises of citizenship. Wise solutions to public problems won't likely come off the top of a hundred million heads.

A third approach to direct democracy -- **the "initiative process"** adapted by a number of states -- allows anyone to propose a law which, if they can get enough of their fellow citizens to co-sponsor it (usually by signing petitions), can be voted on by the entire electorate in the next election. While apparently empowering the grassroots, this process has in many instances been co-opted by special interest groups, especially monied interests who put initiatives on the ballot to increase their wealth and power in the guise of public benefit -- or to confuse voters about competing initiatives that actually come from the grassroots. Since the monied interests have more resources to hire petition-signature-gatherers and to run powerful advertising campaigns based on extensive marketing surveys and expert PR advice (sometimes very devious, last minute blitzes that can't be answered before the election), there's a real question about how democratic existing initiative processes are. Furthermore, such processes offer no more deliberation than the unproductive media debates that characterize most political campaigns.

Representative or Indirect Democracy: where decision making involves the elected representative. This involves a wider community such as a whole nation, where elected members of parliament go to the National Assembly to make decisions on behalf of the citizens of their constituencies.

Characteristics of a Democratic State¹

The following are characteristics of a democratic state:

- There are free and fair elections, which are held after an agreed period of time.
- Government accepts criticism as a path to improvement and development.
- Citizens have freedom of speech and press freedom.
- The rule of law is upheld.
- There are several political parties competing to rule the country, through elections.

Pillars of Democracy:

In order for democracy to be successful people must share certain goals:

- The citizens must be willing to take part in national affairs such as an election.
- Party leaders and members must not use corruption and bribery to gain political power.
- Every citizen is free to stand for elections, regardless of his/her race, tribe, colour or religion.
- Political parties must respect human rights, promote accountability and transparency in government.
- Political parties should not resort to violence as a means of resolving conflicts. This may lead to civil war.
- Conflicts should be resolved by using peaceful means through dialogue.
- When the previous government loses power through elections, it should not cling to government posts, but hand over power to the new government.
- When a party forms the government, it must promote and respect the separation of powers.

Separation of Powers:

This is dividing the government into three different branches called Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. Each of these branches has its own role to perform in the government.

- **Legislature.** The term “legislature” means “maker of laws.” In Zambia, the legislator is the Parliament, and it is made up of the President of the Republic and the National Assembly. A legislature is a state's internal decision-making organization, usually associated with national government, that has the power to enact, amend, and repeal public policy.

1 Monarchy. This describes the reign of a King or Queen. Power is inherited through succession. This power may be absolute or limited:

- The ruler has full control of the state, for example, Swaziland and Morocco.
- The ruler has limited power, for example, Great Britain and Holland.

Legislatures observe and steer governing actions and usually have exclusive authority to amend the budget or budgets involved in the process. The most common names for national legislatures are "parliament" and "congress", although these terms have more specific meanings.

- **Executive.** The role of this branch of government, is to carry out or execute the laws made by the Legislature. It is made up of the President, the Vice President, the Ministers and Civil Servants.

The **Executive** branch of government is charged with the function of implementing or executing the law. This is the core of government, as noted by Heywood, because political systems can operate without constitutions, assemblies, judiciaries and even parties, but they cannot survive without an executive branch to formulate policy and ensure that it is implemented. The executive is the source of political leadership. In the broadest sense, the executive is the branch of government responsible for the implementation of laws and policies made by the legislature. The executive branch extends from the head of government to members of the enforcement agencies

such as the police and the military and includes both ministers and civil servants. More commonly, the term is used in a narrow sense to describe the smaller body of decision-makers who take overall responsibility for the direction and coordination of government policy.

Besides the major function of providing leadership at the highest level of the state, the following are the other functions of the executive:

Ceremonial duties: Heads of state, chief executives and, to a lesser extent, senior ministers or secretaries represent for the state. The role performed by these executive leaders is often formal and ceremonial as they may be tasked to represent their governments at state occasions, international conferences and ratification of treaties and in foreign visits.

Control of policy-making: The key function of the political executive, as mentioned above, is to direct and control the policy process and policy implementation.

Popular political leadership: The popularity of the political executive, more than any other part of the political system, is crucial to the character and stability of the regime. The political executive's role is to direct and control the policy process. The political executive is looked to, in particular, to develop coherent economic and social programmes that meet the needs of more complex and politically sophisticated societies, and to control the state's various external relationships in an increasingly interdependent world. At policy level, it is the ability of the executive to mobilise support that ensures the compliance and cooperation of the general public. Without support from the public, or from other key groups in society, policy implementation becomes difficult or impossible.

Bureaucratic management: The task of overseeing the implementation of policy means that the political executive has a major bureaucratic and administrative responsibility. In this

sense, the chief executive, ministers and secretaries make up the top management charged with running the machinery of government.

Crisis response: The biggest advantage that the political executive has over the other two arms of government is its ability to take swift and decisive action. When crises break out in domestic or international politics, it is the political executive that swings into action by virtue of its hierarchical structure and the scope it provides for personal leadership. It is for this reason that the assemblies allow political executives near-dictatorial powers in times of war, and for executives to seize emergency powers when confronted with domestic crises such as natural disasters, terrorist threats, industrial unrest and civil disorder.

- **Judiciary.** The role of the Judiciary is to ensure that the laws are correctly interpreted to the citizens and obeyed. The Judiciary is made up of the following:
 - Supreme Court
 - High Court
 - Magistrate's Court
 - Local Court

The head of the Judiciary is the Chief Justice. The central function of judges is to adjudicate on the meaning of law, in the sense that they interpret or construct law. This function arises because the makers of law, i.e. the legislators are very often lay people as concerns matters of law. In countries with written/codified constitutions, the function of the judges also involves the interpretation of the constitution itself and this allows judges to arbitrate in disputes between major institutions of government or in disputes between the state and the individual. One of the chief characteristics of the judiciary in liberal democratic systems is that judges are strictly independent and non-political actors. This, however, remains a very controversial and debatable issue in many countries where the involvement of judges in matters which are political is concerned. To ensure the impartiality of court rulings judges, whether appointed or elected, must have job security or tenure guaranteed by law, so that they can make decisions without concern over pressure or attack by those in positions of authority.

4. GOD'S KINGDOM-Luke 17:20-25; Mark 1:14-19.

The word, "kingdom" means a country under the rule of a king. In the Bible, "The Kingdom of God" is not a physical place, but a spiritual kingdom. God is King there and He rules supreme.

Jesus used the following points to explain to the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come.

- The Kingdom of God will not be seen¹³² when it comes. People will not say, "Here it is," or "There it is."
- The Kingdom of God is within you. In other words, "It is spiritual - within the believer - unseen."

The Jews had a completely different idea of the Kingdom of God. They believed that when the Messiah would come, He would gain a great political victory over His enemies. Throughout the world, they would submit to His authority. Then the Kingdom of God would begin.

Who Brought God's Kingdom into the World? - Mark 1:14-15

At the time John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee preaching the good news of God. He said, "The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Present Kingdom

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God had already come. It started with the coming of Jesus the Messiah, not in a political sense, but spiritually in the hearts of all who accept His rule throughout the world.

This was demonstrated by:

- The authority with which Jesus spoke, Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:22; Luke 3:22.
- The fact that it came with power, for example, Jesus' miracles, Mark 9:1.
- Blessing received by those who accepted Jesus' forgiveness, salvation, healing (both spiritually and physically), eternal life.

The Future Kingdom

When Jesus returns a second time, He will gather to Himself all those who have responded to His call, and accepted His rule in their lives. He will also establish an earthly kingdom and will rule the world with the help of His followers, the Christians, Matthew 24:30; 25:14-21.

5. SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND WHY JESUS CAME Signs of the Kingdom

Visible signs showing that the Kingdom of God had already come, were:

- **Spiritual change** - Luke 19:1-9

As people responded to His message there was a complete change in their life styles, for example, Zacchaeus, the tax collector in Luke 19:1-9.

Jesus passed through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. There was a man known as Zacchaeus, who was the chief tax collector, and was wealthy. He wanted to see Jesus, but was unable to see him because of the crowd of people. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him as He passed that way.

When Jesus came to the tree, He stopped and looked up, saying to Zacchaeus, "Come down. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him to his home. When the people saw this they began to say, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "Lord! Here¹⁸³ and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay him back four times the amount." Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham."

- **Healing** - Luke 6:6-11

Jesus healed a man with a shrivelled hand on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees and teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. But He knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so and the hand was restored. But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

- **Deliverance from evil spirits** - Luke 11:14-23

Jesus drove out a demon that caused a man to be mute (dumb). When the demon left, the man began to speak, and the crowd w[^]s amazed. But some of them said, "He is driving out demons by Beelzebub (Satan), the prince of demons." Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. But the power of God had already been demonstrated when Jesus cast out the demon causing the dumbness.

Why Jesus Came - Luke 4:16-21

Whilst in Nazareth, where he had been brought up, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He found the place where it is written, and read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, saying to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

1. HOW DOES ONE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

- **Repentance** - Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 26:20

Jesus taught that the first response to the good news of the Kingdom of God, was to repent of sin. The apostle Peter said repentance must be followed by conversion - a turning to God - ceasing the way of life lived beforehand. This is proof of true repentance.

Repentance is the activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs. It generally involves a commitment to personal change and resolving to live a more responsible and humane life. The practice of repentance plays an important role in the soteriological doctrines of the world's major religions where it is considered necessary for the attainment of salvation. In religious contexts it often involves an act of confession to a spiritual elder (such as a monk or priest). This typically includes an admission of guilt, a promise or resolve not to repeat the offense; an attempt to make restitution for the wrong, or in some way to reverse the harmful effects of the wrong where possible. Within a secular context repentance may form part of the process of psychological healing that takes place during a course of psychotherapy.

Many understand the term repentance to mean “turning from sin.” This is not the biblical definition of repentance. In the Bible, the word repent means “to change one’s mind.” The Bible also tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions (Luke 3:8-14; Acts 3:19). Acts 26:20 declares, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” The full biblical definition of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.

What, then, is the connection between repentance and salvation? The Book of Acts seems to especially focus on repentance in regards to salvation (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). To repent, in relation to salvation, is to change your mind in regard to Jesus Christ. In Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2), he concludes with a call for the people to repent (Acts 2:38). Repent from what? Peter is calling the people who rejected Jesus (Acts 2:36) to change their minds about Him, to recognize that He is indeed “Lord and Christ” (Acts

2:36). Peter is calling the people to change their minds from rejection of Christ as the Messiah to faith in Him as both Messiah and Savior.

Repentance and faith can be understood as “two sides of the same coin.” It is impossible to place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior without first changing your mind about who He is and what He has done. Whether it is repentance from willful rejection or repentance from ignorance or disinterest, it is a change of mind. Biblical repentance, in relation to salvation, is changing your mind from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ.

It is crucially important that we understand repentance is not a work we do to earn salvation. No one can repent and come to God unless God pulls that person to Himself (John 6:44). Acts 5:31 and 11:18 indicate that repentance is something God gives—it is only possible because of His grace. No one can repent unless God grants repentance. All of salvation, including repentance and faith, is a result of God drawing us, opening our eyes, and changing our hearts. God's longsuffering leads us to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), as does His kindness (Romans 2:4).

While repentance is not a work that earns salvation, repentance unto salvation does result in works. It is impossible to truly and fully change your mind without that causing a change in action. In the Bible, repentance results in a change in behavior. That is why John the Baptist called people to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). A person who has truly repented from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ will give evidence of a changed life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19-23; James 2:14-26). Repentance, properly defined, is necessary for salvation. Biblical repentance is changing your mind about Jesus Christ and turning to God in faith for salvation (Acts 3:19). Turning from sin is not the definition of repentance, but it is one of the results of genuine, faith-based repentance towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith in Jesus - Mark 1:14-15; John 3:14-16

Jesus said, “Repent and believe the good news of the Kingdom.” And the good news is that Jesus would be lifted up on a cross to bear away the sins of all who believe. All who believe will not perish but have eternal life.

The Bible uses the phrase “faith in Jesus” synonymously with belief in Jesus as Savior. Romans 3:22–23 says that “righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” When we place our faith in Jesus, we believe in Him, and God grants His righteousness to us.

To have faith in Jesus means to trust Him. Simply. Fully. Without reservation. On one occasion, before Jesus healed two blind men, He asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They answered, “Yes, Lord,” and He healed them “according to [their] faith” (Matthew 9:28–29). The men simply trusted the power and goodness of the Lord, and they received their sight.

When a person has faith in Jesus, it means that he or she believes who Jesus is (God in human form) and trusts what Jesus has done (died and resurrected). This faith in the person and work of Christ is what saves (see Romans 10:9–10; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1).

John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” The key is belief, in response to God’s love. Anyone who places his or her faith in Jesus has the promise of eternal life.

Without faith in Jesus, we remain in sin and cannot be accepted into God’s presence in His perfect heaven. With faith in Jesus, we are given access to the Father as God’s own children (John 1:12).

To have faith in Jesus is to reject all other ways of salvation. We cannot trust in Jesus and anything else. We trust in Jesus alone. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Salvation is exclusive. Jesus is the only way (John 14:6).

Are you ready to place your faith in Jesus? Do you trust Him to save you? There is no special prayer you must pray. However, you can respond right now with a prayer similar to this:

“Dear God, I realize I am a sinner and could never reach heaven by my own good deeds. Right now I place my faith in Jesus Christ as God’s Son who died and rose again to give me eternal life. I trust in Jesus alone. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to live for you. Thank you for accepting me and giving me eternal life.”

Be Born Again - **John 3:3-8**

Jesus told a Pharisee, named Nicodemus, that new birth - spiritual rebirth - was essential in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He said that rebirth comes by water and the Holy Spirit. “Water” refers to the water baptism which John the Baptist preached, that is, the “baptism of repentance” (John 1:32-34). Repentance and faith, followed by the work of the Holy Spirit brings about spiritual rebirth. That is what it means to be born again.

In some Christian denominations (especially Evangelical), to be **born again** is to undergo a "spiritual rebirth" (regeneration) of the human spirit from the Holy Spirit, contrasted with the physical birth everyone experiences. The origin of the term "born again" is the New Testament: "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again. It is a term associated with salvation in mainstream Christianity, usually meaning simply *the baptism*. Individuals who profess to be born again often state that they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Being born again is not just quitting one's sinful life and beginning a new life after believing in Jesus, as most people think. Though this would be good, this in itself is not being born again, nor being saved. When the Bible tells us that we must be born again of water and the Spirit, it means that "sinners must repent, believe in the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, and thereby receive the remission of sin into their hearts and become righteous." In other words, it means being born from above. This is not a change that comes from human beings, but it is a transformation that comes from God.

In 1 John 5:6-7, the Bible says, "This is He who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." Jesus came to this earth by water and blood. Jesus was born of the body of the Virgin Mary incarnated into the flesh of a man, and when He turned 30, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The works of salvation that make us be born again of water and the Spirit began with the birth of Jesus, and as He washed away the sins of the world by receiving His baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of humanity, in the Jordan River.

We know very well that Jesus was vicariously condemned in our place by shedding His blood on the Cross. But why did Jesus, God Himself who was sinless, have to bear this condemnation on the Cross? There are causes and effects in all things. That Jesus died on the Cross for our sins is very closely related to the event of His baptism, when He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, which was a form of the laying on of hands. The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism is an antitype that saves us. This then means that Jesus came by baptism and the Cross.

- **Obedience to Jesus** - Luke 6:46-48

Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me, and hears my words, and does them, is like a man who builds his house on a foundation of rock. The flood may come, but his house stands forever." Jesus is the "foundation of rock." Notice the order: coming, hearing, and doing. "Coming" is the response of faith. "Hearing" leads to learning. "Doing" means obedience.

Submission to Jesus' will and rule brings peace and joy. Those who are obedient to Him are able to stand up to the storms and troubles of life. Jesus, by His Spirit, controls, guides and directs us through every situation.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible has a lot to say about obedience. In the story of the Ten Commandments, we see how important the concept of obedience is to God. Deuteronomy 11:26-28 sums it up like this: "Obey and you will be blessed. Disobey and you will be cursed."

In the New Testament, we learn through the example of Jesus Christ that believers are called to a life of obedience.

What is the Biblical Definition of Obedience?

The general concept of obedience both in the Old and New Testament relates to hearing or hearkening to a higher authority. One of the Greek terms for obedience conveys the idea of positioning oneself under someone by submitting to their authority and command. Another Greek word for obey in the New Testament means "to trust."

According to Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary a succinct definition of biblical obedience is "to hear God's Word and act accordingly."

Eerdman's Bible Dictionary says, "True 'hearing,' or obedience, involves the physical hearing that inspires the hearer, and a belief or trust that in turn motivates the hearer to act in accordance with the speaker's desires."

So, biblical obedience means, simply, to hear, trust, submit and surrender to God and obey his Word.

The Bible has much to say about obedience. In fact, obedience is the essence of the Christian faith. Jesus Himself was "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). For Christians, the act of taking up our cross and following Him (Matthew 16:24) means obedience. The Bible makes it clear that we show our love for Jesus by obeying Him in all things: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Obedience is defined as "dutifully complying with the commands, orders, or instructions of one in authority." Using this definition, we see the elements of biblical obedience. "Dutifully" means it is our obligation to obey God, just as Jesus fulfilled His duty to the Father by dying on the cross for our sin. "Commands, orders or instructions" speaks to the Scriptures in which God has clearly outlined His commandments and His will. "One in authority" is God Himself, whose authority is total and unequivocal. For the Christian, obedience means complying with everything God has commanded because it is our duty to do so.

Having said that, it is important to understand that it is the spirit of obedience, not the act of obedience, that is important. The Pharisees relentlessly pursued acts of obedience to the law and by doing so became self-righteous, believing that they deserved to go to heaven by what they had done. Heaven, to them, was a reward owed to them for their good deeds, but the Bible tells us that, to God, all our righteous works are as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). The obedience that was lacking in the Pharisees was brought to light by Jesus, who exposed their heart attitude. Their hypocrisy in obeying the "letter of the law," but not the spirit of it, characterized their lives, and Jesus rebuked them sharply for it: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outside, but inside they are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also appear righteous to men outwardly, but

inside you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:27-28).

Today, man is not called to obey the Law of Moses. That has been fulfilled in Christ. Man is to obey the “Law of Christ,” which is a law of love for one another (Galatians 6:2; John 13:34). Jesus Himself put it in perspective when He answered the question put to Him by Pharisees, “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?” He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments’” (Matthew 22:36-40).

If we love God, we will obey Him, not always and not perfectly, but our desire is to obey Him and our lives give evidence of that desire. When we love God and obey Him, we naturally have love for one another. Obedience is commanded by God, not only because it glorifies Him when we obey, but because it is the best for us. Obedience brings joy, comfort and peace in a world where such things are hard to find, mainly due to disobedience and rejection of God and His Word

Read more: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-obedience.html#ixzz3U1IWUHy>

Jesus Calls Us to Obedience

In Jesus Christ we find the perfect model of obedience. As his disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love:

John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.(ESV)

Obedience is an Act of Worship

While the Bible places strong emphasis on obedience, it's important to remember that believers are not justified (made righteous) by our obedience. Salvation is a free gift of God, and we can do nothing to merit it.

True Christian obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord:

Romans 12:1

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he

has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.(NLT)

God Rewards Obedience

Over and over again we read in the Bible that God blesses and rewards obedience:

Genesis 22:18

"And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me." (NLT)

Exodus 19:5

Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. (NLT)

Luke 11:28

Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice." (NLT)

James 1:22–25

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. (NLT)

Obedience to God Proves Our Love

1 John 5:2–3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.(ESV)

2 John 6

And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. (ESV)

Obedience to God Demonstrates Our Faith

1 John 2:3–6

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And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the

truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (NLT)

Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

1 Samuel 15:22–23

But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king." (NLT)

Disobedience Leads to Sin and Death

The disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world. But Christ's perfect obedience restores our fellowship with God, for everyone who believes in him.

Romans 5:19

For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous. (ESV)

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (ESV)

Through Obedience We Experience the Blessings of Holy Living

Only Jesus Christ is perfect, therefore, only he could walk in sinless obedience. But as we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from within, we grow in holiness.

Psalms 119:1–8

Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts. They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths.

You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully. Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands. As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should! I will obey your decrees. Please don't give up on me! (NLT)

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Isaiah 48:17–19

This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your

God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow. Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling over you like waves in the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sands along the seashore—too many to count! There would have been no need for your destruction, or for cutting off your family name." (NLT)

2 Corinthians 7:1

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God. (NLT)

The verse above says, "Let us work toward complete holiness." So, we don't learn obedience overnight; it's a lifelong process that we pursue by making it a daily goal

2. THE EFFECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- **The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl** - Matthew 13:44-46

The Kingdom of God is like treasure which was hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, then went and sold all he had and bought the field.

Again the Kingdom of God is compared to a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

These two parables teach that being part of the Kingdom of God is the most important thing in all the world. We must be prepared to give up everything for it.

- **Right priorities** - Luke 12:22-34

Jesus told his disciples not to worry about what they will wear or eat, for life is more important than food. He reminded them of the birds of the air who neither reap nor store food, yet God feeds them. "How much more valuable are you than the birds? Who can add a day more to his life by worrying? If you are not able to do that, why should you worry about the rest?", Jesus asked. "Your father knows your needs, but seek first his Kingdom and these things will be given to you."

The Kingdom must be our first priority. God will provide our daily needs as we trust him. The Christian must see material things from God's point of view. If he holds on to money and possessions as the most important thing in life, he will be spiritually poor.

- **Parable of the Founds** - Luke 19:11 -27

A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. Before he left, he called his ten servants and gave them ten pounds, and told them to trade until he comes back. The master returned and called the servants to whom he had given money.

The first came and said, "Lord your pound has made ten more," He was given authority to rule over ten cities. The second came and said, "Lord your pound has made five more." The master said, "You will take charge of five cities." The third came and said, "Here is your pound which I kept away in a napkin because you are a hard man and you reap where you do not sow."

The king said, "Why then did you not put my money in the bank, for it could have earned interest?" And he said to those who were present, "Take the pound from him and give it to the one with ten pounds." And he said to them, "I tell you that everyone who has, more will be given, and to those who have none, even what they have will be taken away."

This parable teaches that the responsibility for the growth of the Kingdom lies with us. We must allow the teaching of the Kingdom not only to grow within us, but also pass it on to others. This is an important trust. We are in danger of losing what we have if it is not put to good use.

- **The widow's offering** - Luke 21:1-4

Jesus watched the rich putting their gifts into the Temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two small coins. Jesus commented, "The poor widow has put in more than all the others. She gave out of her poverty, all she had to live on. Whereas all the others gave out of their wealth."

This is an example of one who gave all she had to God. A heart of true devotion, and not the amount of money, is what is important to God's Kingdom.

3. FOR WHOM IS THE KINGDOM PREPARED?

The four Gospels teach that the Kingdom of God is for the poor, hungry, the humble, and persecuted people. For example, God chose Mary, a poor and humble young woman, to be the mother of His Son, Luke 1:51-55. In her song, Mary brings out the fact that God often enlightens the minds of the poor and humble, and showers His blessings on them and not the rich and proud. God exalts the lowly (modest, unpretending).

The fact that God chose a poor, humble young woman to be the mother of His Son, shows how highly He regards people who are devoted to Him.

- **The poor, hungry, persecuted, and humble** - Luke **6:20-26**; 14:7-11 God's Kingdom is prepared for the poor in spirit, those who **are hungry for God**, those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

The emphasis is on what Christians think of themselves (Luke 14:7-11). Those who are proud of their spiritual growth, or their knowledge of God, will be humbled. Those who, in humility, recognise their spiritual poverty, and hunger more for God, will be exalted.

- **The Parable of the Wedding Feast** - Luke **14:7-11**

Jesus noticed how the wedding guests picked ~~the~~ places of honour for themselves. By means of a parable, He told them not to take the places of honour. For when someone more distinguished comes along, you will be asked to give up your seat for him. Feeling humiliated, you will have

to take the least important place. He went on to say, Rather, when you are invited, take the lowest place. Then you will be invited to come up to a place of honour. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

In the parable of the Wedding Feast, Jesus pointed out that a humble person does not push himself up to obtain the best seats. He was probably thinking of the Jewish leaders, who assumed that because of their status and position, they would automatically have the best positions in the Kingdom.

4. WHERE IS THE KINGDOM NOW?

In the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, the Gospels teach that the Kingdom of God is present in the world and is growing. It is a universal Kingdom to include all - Jews and Gentiles.

- **Parable of the Mustard seed - Luke 13:18-19**

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 on its branches.”

What does the parable of the mustard seed mean?

Matthew 13:31-32 tells the parable of the mustard seed: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

Using parables, Jesus related truth through intriguing stories with familiar settings. Our grasp of this parable hinges upon a correct understanding of its key elements: the sower, the mustard seed, the great tree which grew from it, and the birds which perched on its branches.

The first two elements are easily understood.

- The sower is Jesus Himself. He is the planter who came to atone for our sins so that we might become fruitful.
- The mustard seed was the smallest seed known at the time. While it becomes more of a shrub than a tree, it can reach about 10 feet high. The mustard seed represents the Gospel, starting very small but growing to reach millions throughout the world who will inherit the kingdom. The field represents all the people of the earth who will receive Him.
- The tree is rooted in Jesus Christ and has grown a harvest far beyond its initial planting. The King James Version says “it is the greatest among all herbs,” growing far reaching branches beyond natural explanation.

- The birds' of the air in this parable probably come from the Greek word "orneon," signifying "to perceive, to hear." The tree offers a refuge for His faithful to rest in Him.

A tree, whose large branches offer a sanctuary for birds, was a familiar Old Testament symbol for a mighty kingdom which gave shelter to the nations. The tree represents earthly greatness and refuge to the nations. The tiny mustard seed, growing to be a tree, symbolizes Jesus' offer of refuge and life in God's Kingdom.

Like with all parables, the purpose of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is to teach a concept or "big idea" using elements or details, like birds, weeds, and growth, that are common, easily recognized, and usually representational of something else. While the elements themselves do have importance, an overemphasis on the details or literal focus on an element usually leads to interpretive errors and missing the main point of the parable. One of the possible practical reasons that Jesus used parables is that parables teach a concept or idea by using word pictures. By depicting concepts, the message is not as readily lost to changes in word usage, technology, cultural context, or the passage of time as easily as it might be with a literal detailed narrative. Two thousand years later, we can still understand concepts like sameness, growth, the presence of evil influence, etc. This approach also promotes practicing principles rather than inflexible adherence to laws. Further emphasis on a singular point is given when multiple parables are given consecutively on the same subject, as is the case with the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is contained in all three of the synoptic gospels. However, the Gospel of Matthew provides us with the most peripheral information, as it includes one parable before and after the mustard seed parable, each teaching on the same subject. Each of the three parables: the weeds among the wheat, the mustard seed, and the yeast have six common elements in them, providing structure which helps us to interpret the individual parables. The common elements are (1) a similitude about "the kingdom of heaven," the earthly sphere of profession both true and false; (2) "a man," Christ; (3) "a field," the world; (4) "seed," the Word of God or its effect; (5) "growth" or "spreading," church growth; and (6) the presence of evil, symbolized by weeds, birds of the air, and yeast.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed was taught in rhetorical hyperbole. Here, Jesus uses a shrub/tree coming from a seed (John 12:24) to represent kingdom growth, consistent with other tree/kingdom references (Ezekiel 17:23 and Daniel 4:11-21). The seed's growth attracts the presence of evil—depicted as birds (Matthew 13:4,19; Revelation 18:2)—to dilute the church while taking advantage of its benefits.

So, the picture painted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed by Jesus is of the humble beginnings of the church experiencing an explosive rate of growth. It grows large and becomes a source of food, rest, and shelter, for both believers and false professing individuals that seek to consume or take advantage of its benefits while residing or mixing among what was produced by the seed (1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:7; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Galatians 1:7). In other words, Jesus predicts that,

while the church will grow extremely large from just a small start, it will not remain pure. While this is not a condemnation of the "bigness" of modern Christianity, it does show us the greatest burden that comes with it. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is both a prediction and a warning. May we listen to its message.

Parable of the Yeast - Luke 13:20-21

Again Jesus asked what He should compare the Kingdom of God to. He said it was like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour. It worked in the dough until it became a huge loaf.

In both parables, Jesus makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is not only for the Jews, but for everybody. His parables illustrate the rapid growth of the Kingdom from small beginnings, to include all people of the world - every race, tribe, and tongue.

The parable of the leaven, also called the parable of the yeast, is another parable told by Jesus to illustrate what the kingdom of God is like.

Context of the Parable

In context, Jesus has just told the Parable of the Mustard Seed which has the same message as this yeast parable.

The idea behind both parables is the growth of the kingdom of God.

Parable of the Leaven (Parable of the Yeast)

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." (Matthew 13:33)

Background Information for the Parable

Yeast is a small organism that has the capacity to cause carbohydrates to ferment, producing carbon dioxide as a byproduct.

The carbon dioxide gas is what causes the dough to rise (hence, we have the little bubbles, or pores, in bread).

Therefore, yeast is used with dough (called leavened dough) to make it rise, which is why we have fluffy bread instead of flat bread.

Just a little bit of yeast, placed in a much larger batch of dough, can cause the entire thing to be affected by the yeast and thus become leavened.

Meaning of the Parable of the Leaven (Parable of the Yeast)

According to Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is like yeast used to leaven an entire batch of dough.

Thus, as the kingdom of God is introduced, it begins to affect everything until, eventually, everything is affected; and the whole thing is changed so much that it is now something new, and can no longer be called what it originally was.

This process takes place on the individual level, the communal level, the global level, etc.

Jesus' Parable of the Leaven is found in two of the Gospels. It is a very simple story—a snapshot of life, really: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33; cf. Luke 13:20-21).

Jesus uses this story as an object lesson to illustrate the kingdom of heaven. A woman takes yeast (leaven) and mixes it into dough. Eventually, the whole of the dough is leavened. What does it mean?

First, it's important to define “kingdom of heaven.” By this, Jesus is referring to His domain as the Messiah. In the current age, the kingdom of heaven is spiritual, existing within the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21). Later, the kingdom will be manifest physically, when the Lord Jesus establishes His throne on this earth (Revelation 11:15).

In the Parable of the Leaven, we learn several things about the working of the kingdom in our present age. Each of these lessons stems from the nature of yeast.

First, the kingdom of God may have small beginnings, but it will increase. Yeast is microscopic in size, and only a little is kneaded into the dough. Yet, given time, the yeast will spread through all the dough. In the same way, Jesus' domain started with twelve men in an obscure corner of Galilee, but it has spread throughout the world. The gospel makes progress.

Second, the kingdom of God exerts its influence from within, not from without. Yeast makes dough rise from within. God first changes the heart of a person, and that internal change has external manifestations. The gospel influence in a culture works the same way: Christians within a culture act as agents of change, slowly transforming that culture from within.

Third, the effect of the kingdom of God will be comprehensive. Just as yeast works until the dough has completely risen, the ultimate benefit of the kingdom of God will be worldwide (Psalm 72:19; Daniel 2:35). “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Fourth, although the kingdom of God works invisibly, its effect is evident to all. Yeast does its job slowly, secretly and silently, but no one can deny its effect on bread. The same is true of the work of grace in our hearts.

The nature of yeast is to grow and to change whatever it contacts. When we accept Christ, His grace grows in our hearts and changes us from the inside out. As the gospel transforms lives, it exerts a pervasive influence in the world at large. As we “reflect the Lord's glory, [we] are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

In Jesus' first two parables about the kingdom of God, the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8) and the Parable of the Tares (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43), what did the seed represent?

In the Parable of the Sower, the seed represented the Good News of the kingdom of God.

In the Parable of the Tares, the seed represented two types of human beings, Believer or non-Believer, which was determined by the two antagonistic sowers.

2. What did Jesus compare the kingdom God to (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)? What is the cultural context of this object?

The kingdom of God was compared to a mustard seed.

The mustard seed is among the smallest of seeds of the world (the orchid seed is smaller). The mustard plant (likely *brassica nigra*) is an annual that typically grows to a four foot shrub; however, it has been known to grow as much as fifteen feet near the Jordan River. Its leaves and shoots can be used as an herb and its seed as a spice.

In using the tree imagery with birds flocking to its branches, Jesus recalls the Old Testament image of a great kingdom (Ezek 17:22-24; 31:3-14; Dan 4:7-23).

There has been some question whether the mustard shrub could support nesting birds, because its full growth isn't achieved till well after the nesting season. While the Greek term does mean "nest," it is possible that it is with the context of "rest" or "lodge."

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3. What is the meaning of the parable?

Jesus draws attention to two points about the mustard seed:

- 1) The seed to emphasize its very small size.
- 2) The mature end of the seed is the result of its rapid growth into a large "tree" and larger than any other plants of the garden.

Was Jesus making a point of the supernatural growth of the kingdom of God? If so, the mustard shrub would be a poor image of this supernatural growth. The parable is not about the growth of the tree nor a comparison between the seed and the tree.

The point of the parable places an emphasis in the power of the seed; its small size belies how big the plant will ultimately be. In like manner, the small and humble beginning of Jesus' ministry belies the future glory of the kingdom of God.

For the Jews, who were expecting a great Messianic kingdom as taught by the Old Testament, the analogy to the mustard seed symbolizing its obscure beginnings would have been puzzling to grasp.

4. In the Parable of the Yeast, what did Jesus compare the kingdom of God to (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)? What is the cultural context of the object here?

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to yeast.

In rural Galilee, presumably a small amount of yeast was used for dough; however, three pecks of flour is roughly a bushel which equates to 100 loaves of bread each weighing 1.5 pounds!!

5. What is the meaning of the kingdom of God's analogy to yeast?

Like the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the kingdom begins in a small way; however, unlike the mustard seed, yeast does not grow. Instead yeast transforms and changes the flour into dough.

With this analogy, Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is a small living agent that, once initiated, cannot stop until it transforms and changes completely.

5. GODS' KINGDOM AND CHRISTIANS TODAY

The way Christians live, ought to show that God's Kingdom comes first in their lives. Everything else is of secondary importance.

A Christian must be prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of the Kingdom of God. It must come first in everything. God has promised that if the Kingdom of God comes first in our lives, then all our temporal needs will be met, and other blessings added, Matthew 6:31-34.

The presence and coming of the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus. For example, "his teaching was designed to show men how they might enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20; 7:21). His mighty works were intended to prove that the Kingdom of God had come upon them (Matt. 12: 28). His parables illustrated to His disciples the truth about the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:11). And when He taught His followers to pray, at the heart of their petition were the words, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). On the eve of His death, He assured His disciples that He would yet share with them the happiness and the fellowship of the Kingdom (Luke 22:22-30). And He promised that He would appear again, on the earth in glory to bring the blessedness of the Kingdom to those for whom it was prepared (Matt. 25:31, 34)." ^[1]^

The term "Kingdom of God" occurs four times in Matthew (12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43), fourteen times in Mark, thirty-two times in Luke, twice in the Gospel of John (3:3, 5), six times in Acts, eight times in Paul, and once in Revelation (12:10). Matthew actually prefers the term "Kingdom of heaven" which he uses over 20 times in his gospel.

While Matthew primarily uses the term "kingdom of heaven" and other gospel writers (notably

The Old Testament ends on a note of expectation —the return of Elijah the prophet who would soften the hearts of the people to obey the Law of Moses in conformity with Israel's calling as God's holy nation (Mal. 4:4-6). However, four hundred long years pass before Israel hears any word from God. During this time, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans all ruled over Israel in Palestine. The apocryphal books were written and the apocalyptic prophets preached. But no authentic prophet arose to bring a good word from God.

Finally, the deafening silence was shattered by the strong voice of John the Baptist — the promised forerunner of Messiah who was also the new Elijah (Matt. 3:3; 11:14; Mark 1:2-3; 9:13; Luke 3:4-6). John the [Southern?] Baptist made this startling, but exciting announcement: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2)!

At long last, God was at work again! He was about to do something new! Indeed He was! What He was about to do was to fulfill the redemptive hope of the Old Testament through the inauguration of the Kingdom of God in the person of His own virgin-born Son, Jesus Christ. The time had finally come. The offspring of the woman who would bring redemption to the earth was at hand. The covenants of promise were about to be fulfilled. God's redeeming rule was about to break into the world! This is what the story of Jesus and the New Testament is all about! At the heart of this story is the concept of the Kingdom of God.

Views of the Kingdom

Bible scholars agree that “the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus.”[1] The Biblical evidence for this is quite clear. For example, the gospel of Mark introduces Jesus and His mission with these words: “And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:13-14). Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ ministry is similar: “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people” (Matt. 4:23). Luke chimes in on the same note with this comment: “But He [Jesus] said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose’” (Luke 4:43). These three verses are unanimous: the Kingdom was at the heart of Jesus’ purpose on earth.

Unfortunately, however, scholarly accord ends here. There is little if any agreement about what the Kingdom is or how it should be defined. There is not much understanding about its identity among the rank and file in our churches either. Some believe that God’s Kingdom is the same as heaven. Catholics (and some Protestants) tend to equate it with the institutional church (so the phrase “Kingdom work” means “church work”). Pietists locate the Kingdom of God in the heart and connect it with the spiritual life. Liberal Christians associate God’s Kingdom with social reform (as in the social gospel). Others still believe that the Kingdom is still future and will be established for the Jews during the 1000 year reign of Jesus on the earth.

Obviously there is not much agreement or clarity these days about the Biblical concept of the Kingdom. In order to shed some light on this subject, let’s do our best to see how the Bible answers several important questions about the definition, timing, and nature of this crucial theme.

What is the Kingdom of God?

The Hebrew word for kingdom is *malkut* and its Greek counterpart is *basileia*. Both terms primarily mean “rule” or “reign.” Only secondarily do they denote a realm, sphere, or territory over which a rule or reign is exercised. Both terms have a dynamic or active meaning, and refer to the exercise of God’s power, dominion, or sovereignty.

This is clear in the Old Testament, particularly in the poetry of the Psalms where parallel lines clarify what the term “kingdom” means. For example, Psalm 22:28 says, “For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over all.” Similarly, Psalm 103:19 states, “The Lord has established His throne [kingdom] in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.” Psalm 145:11 declares, “They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power.” Here kingdom is associated with the ideas of God’s rule, sovereignty, and power.

The New Testament term means the same thing. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10),” we are asking God to exert His authority in the world so that His purposes are achieved. In Jesus’ parable about “A certain nobleman who went to a distant country to receive a kingdom,” those over whom he was to rule said: “We do not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:12, 14). In Colossians 1:13, Paul teaches that redemption amounts to an exchange of rulers over our lives, stating that God has delivered us believers “from the authority of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

Thus, the NT nuance for kingdom in these verses connect it with the exertion of God’s will, the act of ruling or reigning, the exercise of authority.

So, then, from this brief study, we see that the expression “Kingdom of God” does not refer to heaven or the church or the heart or to moral reform or to a future realm. Rather it refers to the active, dynamic exercise of God’s rule, authority, dominion, and power in the world!

So when John the Baptist announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand, he meant that God’s rule was just about to break into the world through the Messiah. When Jesus Christ Himself preached and proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, He meant that in and by Himself, God was exercising His power and authority in a redemptive way against all the evil in the world!

In short, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God manifested in Christ to bring redemption to the earth. No wonder the Kingdom is the central theme of the New Testament!

The big “Kingdom” picture

This makes good sense when we step back and take a look at the big picture. As we have seen, God established His Kingdom at creation. He was the ruler over His world and the people He had made. But His Kingdom was attacked and overtaken by the authority of Satan when humanity fell into sin. Ever since, God has been at work to reassert His rightful rule over the earth and to take it and His people back from the powers of sin, death, and Satan. In fulfillment of the covenants of redemption established by God in the Old Testament, the decisive moment in this war of all wars took place when God’s Kingdom arrived in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ who entered into conflict with and defeated God’s enemies. Those who now submit to Christ’s redeeming rule through faith are restored to God and become new creatures in Him. They anticipate the completion of His redemptive work at His second advent when the whole creation will be restored as God’s Kingdom and made new.

So the scenario is this: God’s Kingdom rule was established at creation; It was attacked by Satan at the fall; now it is being restored on earth through²⁰³ the life and ministry of Jesus Christ who

defeats Satan, death, and sin! No wonder He taught us to pray in this way: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven!”

Now let us press on to learn more about the timing of God’s Kingdom.

When is the Kingdom of God?

Has God’s kingly rule and authority already come into the world? Or is it still future? Or is there some sense in which it is both present and future? The teaching of the New Testament is clear: The Kingdom is both “already” but “not yet.” It has come, and yet it is coming. It is both present and future. Let’s examine the Biblical evidence for this point of view.

The presence of the Kingdom of God. Several verses in the New Testament teach that God’s rule has broken into human history to deliver men and women from the power of sin, death, and Satan. Matthew 12:28-29 is a case in point:

“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom [read: redeeming rule] of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”

In the context of these verses, Jesus had been accused by the Pharisees of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. Nonsense, Jesus said. Any kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.

Contrariwise, the fact that He exorcised demons by the power of God’s Spirit was proof positive that God’s redeeming rule had come upon them! In Christ, God was acting in kingly power to deliver those possessed by demons. When a person was so delivered, this was a clear sign of the victory of God’s rule in the world over Satan and his minions. In fact, as verse 29 above points out, this is what Jesus’ ministry was all about: binding the “strong man” Satan through the exercise of His sovereign power (see also 1 John 3:8). Once Satan is bound, Jesus will “carry off his property” and “plunder his house,” that is, take back the people who rightfully belong to Him. In short, Jesus’ exorcisms demonstrate the mighty presence of the Kingdom of God delivering people from the power of evil!

Another passage that indicates the presence of God’s kingship is Luke 17: 20-21.

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst. "

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Like many in Israel, the Pharisees were looking forward to the arrival of God’s kingly rule in the world. But when would it come, they asked? Jesus makes two very important points in His

response to their inquiry. One, and contrary to standard Jewish expectation, God's kingship would not come apocalyptically with great signs and wonders that people could see; instead it must be coming in some secret or hidden way. Two, this invisible Kingdom was not a future thing at all, but was already in their midst. Undoubtedly, Jesus was referring to Himself as the embodiment of God's sovereignty that had come into the world to destroy the malicious works of God's enemies.

As a matter of fact, God's Kingdom power and authority was present in Jesus and demonstrated in His every word and in His every deed. Over against falsehood and error, He taught truth, and His powerful teaching was proof positive of the Kingdom's presence. Over against disease, death and demonic possession, He healed, resurrected, and delivered, and His miracles were also powerful proofs positive of the kingdom's presence. From start to finish, Jesus' entire life and ministry was the expression of God's mighty rule that had broken into history to deliver the creation and its human inhabitants from the curse of sin and death. The rule of God was in Jesus. He was, as ancient church theologians believed, the *Autobasileia*, Himself the Kingdom!

Hence, in the book of Acts, when the apostles preach Jesus, they preach the kingdom and when they preach the kingdom, they preach Jesus! See for yourself:

But when they [the people of Samaria] believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

And when they [Roman Jews] had set a day for him [Paul], they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, Acts 28:31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Thus we conclude that the New Testament teaches that the Kingdom of God has already come! But it also affirms that it is not yet. The Kingdom of God has come and is coming! How can this be? Actually this is pretty easy to substantiate.

The future of the Kingdom of God. New Testament evidence for a future manifestation of the Kingdom is overwhelming. The apocalyptic discourses in the synoptic gospels leave no doubt about Christ's bodily second coming, and the final establishment of God's rule in the world (see Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21). Consider this passage as an example (Matt. 25:31-34):

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

John's gospel also contains references to Christ's return (John 14:3; 21:22; 1 John 2:28; 3:2), and so does his book of the Revelation (2:26-28; 3:12; 11:15; 19:11-16; 21:1-5; 22 7). Revelation 19:11-16 depicts the King of Kings and Lord of Lords returning to bring judgment upon the nations, and Revelation 21:1-5 conveys the glory of our final estate in very hopeful terms.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Of course, the epistles of Paul and Peter are replete with references to the coming of Christ and future manifestation of God's Kingdom (Rom. 8:18-25; 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 15; 16:22; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Eph. 1:9-10; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 11:13-16; 12: 13:14; James 5:8; 1 Pet. 2 Pet. 3:8-13). The last text cited sums up the Christian expectation about the return of Christ and the future of the earth.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

How might we sum up the NT teaching about this matter of the timing of the Kingdom of God? Theologian George L. Ladd explains its two stages as clearly as anyone in these words that tie our study together up to this point.

Our central thesis is that the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among human beings, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act [with signs and wonders] at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver people from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history [already], and consummation at the end of history [not yet].[2]

Now the Jews certainly believed that whenever the Kingdom came, it would come with some pizzazz. But it didn't. It came in a rather understated way, to say the least. Hence, we must answer one last question about the manner in which the kingdom of God came.

How did the Kingdom come?

The shorthand answer to this question is this: it came unexpectedly in a hidden, spiritual form. It is the secret presence of God's rule in the world in advance of its powerful apocalyptic manifestation; it is present Kingdom fulfillment without future Kingdom consummation. That the Jews were expecting something really BIG whenever God broke into history seems clear enough from several passages in the gospels (e.g., Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 1:67-75). Their version of Messiah was militaristic and political. They sought a Savior who would destroy evil and evil people. But it didn't happen that way.

Important parables in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke help us to understand this "mystery of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 13:10-11; Mark 4:10-11; Luke 8:9-10). The parables explain how the Kingdom has come in this unexpected, but real manner. They disclose a new, previously unrevealed aspect of the divine Kingdom that is already established without bring in the end. We will summarize the significance of the Kingdom parables in Matthew 13, interpreting them in their historical context as they would have been understood by Jesus' disciples.

The parable of the four soils (Matt. 13:1-9; 18-23): The Kingdom of God had come, but contrary to standard expectation, it would not be spread by power, but by the preaching of the Word. The responses to this proclamation would depend upon the conditions of the listeners' hearts. The Kingdom of God will have only partial success. It will not sweep away all evil automatically, but, like seed, will be received by differently by different types of soils or hearts.

The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). This parable also teaches that the Kingdom is already present in the world, but its coming did not bring about the final separation of the wicked from the righteous. In the midst of this present age, society continues with its intermixture of the good and the evil. The sons²⁰⁷ of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one

continue side by side. Only at the end of the age will the separation take place at the eschatological judgment.

The parables of the mustard seed and leaven (Matt. 13: 31-33). As a mustard seed, the Kingdom of God has entered the world in an imperceptible, humble form, virtually unnoticed and inauspicious. Yet, one day it will be a great tree and encompass the earth. How the Kingdom could be embodied in a relatively insignificant band of disciples who embrace outcasts, sinners, tax collectors is answered by this parable. Similarly, the Kingdom of God is hidden as leaven in a lump of dough. It will operate secretly but effectively, and will one day prevail such that no rival kingdom exists.

The parables of the treasure and pearl (Matt. 13:44-46). Because of the Kingdom's inauspicious presence, its importance might be overlooked or despised. Both of these parables, however, teach that the Kingdom of God is of inestimable value and ought to be sought over all other possessions. It is humanity's greatest good. It is worth selling everything in order to own it.

The parable of the drag-net (Matt. 13:47-50). Virtually identical in meaning to the wheat and the tares, this parable teaches that the kingdom has come into the world, but without effecting the final judgment. Again, contrary to expectations, a mixed spiritual society will remain until Christ returns.[3]

The Kingdom that was supposed to come in power and do away with evil came by means of preaching and allowed the wicked to remain alongside the righteous until the end. This is really God's mercy! Had He come in power and judgment, none of us would be here today! Though the Kingdom arrived in a humble way, it is humankind's greatest good. It is worth sacrificing everything to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom's greatest mystery is connected with the cross!

The Kingdom and the cross

Simply put, the Kingdom is the cross! The cross is the Kingdom – in disguise! Yes, there on the cross, God in Christ conquered sin, defeated death, and triumphed over Satan. Sounds like a Kingdom victory to me! Yet it could not have appeared more unkingly. Jesus hung there in apparent defeat. There He suffered and died. Satan appears to have won the battle. Yet by this means, Jesus triumphed over God's enemies and ours, and shares that victory with those who believe. Jesus is Christus Victor! By means of this victory, we are restored to God and our true purposes as human beings. It is the mystery of the Kingdom that makes us new creatures in Christ.

Conclusion

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So while there are many views of the Kingdom floating about these days, the Bible is clear: the Kingdom of God is the rule or reign of God. It is not the church, or heaven, or moral reform, or the heart, or the future realm. It is God's sovereignty in action against all the evil in the world! It came into the world in Christ. It is both present and future. Its arrival, however, was startling. It came as a mystery, in an unexpected form through the humble person and work of Jesus as the Suffering Servant who defeated sin, death, and Satan. It has set us free! It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of redemption and the covenants of God.

6. GOD'S KINGDOM CONTRASTED WITH MODERN STATES

In a modern state, we have a leader who is supported by a Cabinet and Ministers, all of whom were elected to Parliament by the people. We also have ordinary Members of Parliament who represent their part of the country in what are called "constituencies". They too are elected by the people.

In contrast, the Kingdom of God is not an actual or physical place, but is where God rules over the hearts, minds and wills of people. It is brought to us by Jesus Christ, through repentance, faith in Him, and obedience to Him. It must take first place in our lives.

7. CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Christianity

- The Kingdom of God is for the humble, poor, hungry and the persecuted.
- It must be our first priority. Material wealth becomes secondary.
- Christians must be prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of the Kingdom.
- Christians are responsible to pass on the message to others so that the Kingdom may increase.
- Christians must show true devotion to God, and be a good example to others in their Christian behaviour.

Islam

The central ideals of the Islamic faith are:

- Belief in Allah (God) - Surrendering completely to the will of Allah.
- » Belief in the Day of Judgement and life after death.
- » Belief that the good and bad are both ordained by Allah.
- The five Pillars of Islam also have to be followed and these are:

The Kalima: There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet. Prayers: Pray five times a day facing Mecca.

Fasting: During the month of Ramadan.

Alms-giving: Ritual giving of money to the poor.

Pilgrimage: It is important to travel to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

Hinduism

The Hindu Dharma has five main principles.

- God. He is the creator and controller of the Universe.
- Prayer. This is the simplest way of knowing and finding God.
- Reincarnation. The soul never dies. It continues to live in other bodies through Rebirth or Reincarnation.
- Law of Action. This is known as Karma, one's actions in his previous life.
- Non-Violence. Reverence for life is very important. Reverence for the cow is an illustration of the Hindu belief that the soul does not only live in a human form, but in all creatures. From this outlook comes the principle of non-violence, of love for each other without hate or envy.

Zambian Tradition

The most important beliefs are to:

- Keep in touch with ancestral spirits.
- Offer sacrifices to appease the spirits.
- Spirits will help during times of trouble, famine, drought, and sickness.
- If spirits are not respected, they may cause disasters or trouble.
- An object is chosen to which sacrifices and prayers are offered.

EXERCISE

1. Compare the democratic type of government with the Kingdom of God.
2. Fill in blanks using the words listed below, freedom of expression Judiciary autocratic force inheritance

In a dictatorial state there is no..... Most rulers
come
 to power through or by except for the type of
 dictatorship where a leader was once elected. The is not independent. It is
 controlled by those in power.

3. Relate the following and give the meaning of each:
 - (a) The Hidden Treasure and Pearl
 - (b) The Parable of the Pounds

1. What is the Kingdom of God and why does it matter?
2. What seems to be the relationship between the Kingdom of God and His covenant? What does this imply for us?
3. What do we mean by saying that the Kingdom is both “here already and yet to come”? Discuss some of the implications of each of these:
4. What do we learn from the parables of Jesus about how the Kingdom manifests itself in our day? How do believers participate in the Kingdom of God?
5. What will the Kingdom be like when it has fully come?

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