

The Crusade
For the Souls of Men

The Gospel Story

When God Walked Among Us

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The Crusade For the Souls of Men: The Gospel Story:
When God Walked Among Us

by John King

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Cover: I choose the cover from among freely offered pictures because it depicts the spiritual darkness of a time in which Christ came.

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Introduction

The coming of Christ has left its impression upon our world. Not only in some general sense, but more so, in a personal way every individual has been affected by this singular life in history.

"Gauged by the consequences that have followed: the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus have been the most important events in the history of man," wrote Kenneth Latourette, late Professor of History at Yale. "Measured by His influence, Jesus is central in the human story ... "

It is, as if, at the Savior's coming, the circle of history was broken and laid out in a straight line. Before His advent, life went on and on, seemingly, with endless repetition. After the analogy of the Tower of Babel, man used his ingenuity to build his world, define his future, and surrender his religious convictions to his limited understanding of what life is suppose to be all about. There was not -- as well there could not be -- any loftier purpose for being than in a spiraling fashion (evolving?) to maintain the cycle of life, of birth and death. Man's hope in the evolutionist's theory points this out. It expresses man's desire to break out and become something better. To hope in something more than the mediocrity of life's daily routine, to hope in some distant tomorrow when he shall have evolved beyond his current existence. The beginnings of this hope were scribbled down in the Greek mythologist's notebook. Greek mythology saw it as a kind of reincarnation of the just who, in the course of many lifetimes, would eventually be welcomed into the company of the gods.

A few centuries, however, before our Lord's visit, the

light of hope in the fates and gods, in the mythologies (Mithraism and all religious explanation), to bring about that better destiny began to dim. In his frustration, part of mankind turned ultimately to philosophy and science, which Saint Paul added, "falsely called" (I Timothy 6:20), for reassurance. But we cannot live without hope! Man continued to dream. There had to be a reason for living, a reason for being, though religion failed to confirm this!

Christ brought that reason with Him. "Eat, drink, and be merry; for, tomorrow, we die" can no longer be for us an axiom on life. By His own death and resurrection, the Savior has "paved the road" beyond the point of death into eternity. By so doing, He has provided man with a destiny -- more correctly -- a destination, beyond the grave into a future with God.

It remains a Truth to be dealt with. Jesus *is* the One "*with Whom we have to do.*" (Hebrews 4:13) Somehow, when God in the person of Jesus the Christ invaded history, His life and death became an unavoidable issue. As Dorothy Sayer wrote in her play "*Man Born to be King,*" [Sayer, 290] about Calvary, "*this is the only thing that has ever really happened.*" God -- in short -- requires of everyone a response to this question:

"What will you do with Jesus?!"

Our lives will somehow, hereafter, be governed by our answer.

Preface

The following work is a brief history of our Lord's ministry. We know that volumes have already been written on the Life and Times of our Lord. This work, however, was not written to expand upon the teachings of Jesus, nor have we taken the time in these few pages to outline the sundry views of the scholars on some of the difficult texts. Our object is to look more closely at the situations Jesus encountered in His ministry. From these details we can observe our Lord's reactions to life. We want to walk beside Him and read His heart. We can note how He felt. We can view His moments of greatest joy and deepest sorrows. In a sense, walking beside Him through the written word, we can become a little closer to Him. Getting to know Him is what life should be all about.

Just a note about footnotes: Reference was made to the "Text" itself. Footnotes have been excluded. Few are genuinely impressed by them anyway. A Bibliography to note the sources has been provided.

Bathabara

The Gospel story is one of Atonement. It is a history of our Lord's passion, His death and resurrection. Any dramatization, therefore, that depicts the Savior as just another miracle worker fails to focus in on this real issue, our salvation. In reality, His footsteps did not merely cut back and forth across Palestine. Though He walked from Galilee to Judea and back again, healing the sick and preaching the Kingdom, nonetheless, it was one path leading only to Calvary.

Each miracle and teaching was a step in that direction. Every act was in preparation for the next one. The ministry He began in Cana with the transforming of water into wine would be finished on the Cross with the provision made for transforming the soul.

The Story does not begin in Gethsemane but at Bathabara, where Jesus was baptized by John, and it is one continuous event to His death and resurrection. Leaving Nazareth, the place of his childhood (Mark 1:9), He journeyed to Bathabara or Bethany beyond Jordan -- as it was also called -- to be water baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22). Jesus, Who was sinless, did not need to be baptized unto repentance for the remission of sins. For Him baptism meant other things. He would instead identify with the sinner. He had come to be our example, to lead us out of sin and show the way to life eternal.

Of great significance also is the fact that this single act of humble submission to the Father is a clear indication of His readiness to begin a ministry in which only the Father's

will would be done. If salvation is to be provided, only the eternal plan thought out from the foundation of the world must be followed in detail (Hebrews 4:3).

From Bathabara, The Holy Spirit led Him into the Wilderness to be tempted during forty days and nights of fasting and prayer (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13). As Ezekiel experienced, the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Savior (Ezekiel 37:1). He was keenly sensitive and aware of the Spirit's direction, but, why the wilderness?

The lessons of the wilderness are three:

1. It was a place for purification (1 Peter 1:6-7). Even Jesus "learned obedience" though suffering (Hebrews 5:8).
2. It was a place of power (Luke 4:14; 2 Corinthians 12:9).
3. It was a place of privileged blessings to those mature enough to receive them. (Mark 1: 12 "The Angels ministered unto Him.)

He could now begin His work, so long it seemed in coming

The Story of Jesus' life is resumed in the Gospel message of John. From the wilderness, He returned to the place of His baptism for two very important reasons.

1. It was here He would make His initial acquaintance with five of John's disciples who would later become apostles: John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel, who was Bartholomew.
2. This meeting most naturally took place in the presence of John the Baptist, for it was John, the friend of the Bridegroom, whose ministry it was to

introduce the Lamb of God to the world.

For John (The Beloved), the Gospel writer, these three days were most memorable. On the first day (John 1:19-28), John the Baptist proclaimed before an official delegation from the Sanhedrin the startling fact of the actual presence of the Messiah in the midst of His people (John 1:26). On the next day (John 1:29), the Baptist personally introduced two of his disciples, Andrew and John the Beloved, to Jesus. One scholar designates this day as the "birthday of faith."

By the following day, two had become five (John 1:43, 2:11) and the first nucleus of believers was formed. More significant is the fact that six months of wilderness preaching, honey and wild locust for the Baptist was finally fulfilled in a climatic moment in Biblical history that would mark the decreasing importance of his own ministry (John 3:30) and the increasing importance of our Lord's.

John 3:24-"For John the Baptist was not yet cast into prison" is an important note. John's "decreasing" would come quickly. His ministry would be relatively brief. He was thirty years in preparation for perhaps one year of ministry. God would grant him those few extra months to see the confirmation of the prophecy and revelation that was given to him at the Jordan's edge the day Jesus came to be baptized (Matthew 11:3-5). It is also important to note that though John the Baptist decreased, his teaching and ministry never "declined" in importance. To this day, there remains no greater than John (Luke 7:28) "but he that is least in the Kingdom of God."

Gallilee

With five "soon-to-be-called apostles" at His side, Jesus took His journey back into Galilee to the town of Cana (John 2:1-11) where He received a special invitation to a family wedding. The account is well known.

What must be emphasized is the reason why Jesus came with His five disciples to this reception. Why the use of His miraculous abilities to transform water to wine?

Verse 11 makes the entire incident meaningful:

"Jesus .. manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed on Him."

One brother comments, "Thus faith, born of the testimony of the forerunner (John the Baptist) and of the contact of the first disciples with Jesus Himself, is extended and confirmed by the increasing spectacle of His glory."

Our prayer is always, "Lord, extend and confirm our faith that we may more faithfully rely upon You for direction and entrust to You our lives."

Before Jesus would return to Judea and Jerusalem to resume His ministry there, one more small but important detail must be tended to.

He must visit Capernaum with His mother and brothers in attendance (John 2:12).

This is a very private moment in our Saviour's life--alone with His immediate family ... Perhaps, He is saying goodbye -- He is about ready to launch Himself into His work. "...the Passover feast draws near," to quote F. L. Godet,

"The moment has come for Jesus to begin (His work as

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Messiah) in the ... capital, at Jerusalem, (John 2:13-22). From this moment, He calls His disciples to accompany Him constantly (John 2:17). The purification of the Temple is a significant appeal to every ... conscience; the people and their rulers [the Levites and clergy must be first (1 Peter 4:17)] are invited by this bold act to cooperate ... for the spiritual elevation (of the Kingdom of God) under the direction of Jesus. If the people yielded themselves all was gained. Instead ... they remain cold (John 1:11) ... the sign of a secret hostility."

Jerusalem

Jesus' cleansing the temple was an act of Holiness not an act of power. It is the work of miracles, however, that attracts attention in Israel. Jesus methodically and with a controlled zeal displays no tolerance for markets in the place of prayer. By the use of His hands, He teaches the importance of having the heart right before God and cleansing the inner temple of the soul if our worship is to be acceptable to God and beneficial to us.

When He was finished, those in authority in the temple, who had not only condoned the marketing of sacrificial animals there, but who had no doubt instituted it, sensed that a higher authority than their own had overruled. Now, by asking for a sign, they hoped to engage Jesus in an argument designed to rationalize away the voice of their conscience and save face with the people. All this was in vain, for Jesus would not strive with them (Matthew 12:19); rather, He brought the message of His death and resurrection in an illustration that even puzzled His disciples.

Later, they would understand that when He spoke of rebuilding the temple, it was not the building made with hands that He had just cleansed, but rather (John 2:21) He spake of the temple of His body.

Jesus' ministry at this time in Judea was more extensive than shown in this brief record in John (Chapters 2 & 3). Perhaps it was months, or, as it is believed by some, He spent an entire year in Judea ministering to the sick as well as preaching the news of the Kingdom of God. As was to be expected with His "increasing" in importance in the

program of God, His disciples were baptizing many other disciples and His popularity among the people was growing (John 4:1).

The record is plain, however, in revealing a general unbelief prevalent among the Judeans who sought for signs of power and healings rather than the Word of God. The outstanding example in John's narrative of Judean interest in the Savior is seen in John 3 in the person of Nicodemus.

He was singularly impressed by the miracles Jesus had been performing (John 3:2) and though he respected Jesus for His teaching skills, nonetheless, he was deeply puzzled by our Lord's message (John 3:9). It was a warm and tender moment. Jesus endeavored to give him a purer understanding of the person and work of the Messiah than that which he had derived from Pharisaic teaching. He dismissed him with this farewell which was full of encouragement (John 3:21)

"...whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God." [NIV]

Nicodemus through his openness and growing interest in Jesus' message and ministry would in time be given to understand (John 7:50 and 19:39). He, however, is outstanding. The vast majority in Judea sought signs and miracles and so willingly came under Pharisaic influences. This majority would advance from doubt and unbelief to suspicion and open hostility against the Lord until it would be impossible for Jesus to come into their communities openly because (John 7:1)

"the Jews sought to kill Him."

This point was so well put by F. L. Godet,

"These few traces of faith (as Nicodemus gave evidence), however, do not counterbalance the great fact of the National unbelief which becomes more marked. This tragic fact is the subject of the final testimony which John the Baptist renders

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to Jesus before he leaves the scene (John 3:22-36)."

They are both baptizing in Judea; John takes advantage of this proximity to proclaim Him yet once more as the Bridegroom of Israel. Then in the face of the marked indifference of the people and the rulers towards the Messiah, he gives utterance to that threatening-- the last echo of the thunders of Sinai, the final word of the Old Testament (John 3:36):

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." [NIV]

With this general unbelief, on the one hand, and this defective faith in some (Nicodemus), is a joyful contrast to the spectacle of a whole city which, without the aid of any miracle, welcomed Jesus with faith, as all Israel should have received Him ... It is Samaria which gives this example".

Forbidden Samaria, Gentile hearts, uncircumcised of flesh, unlearned in the true significance of Old Testament law, not welcomed in Israel ... the Savior would spend two entire days with them (John 4:40). Oh, how He was refreshed! (John 4:32). Oh, how His heart longed to continue with them feeding them the Word of God (John 4:35). He must, however, continue on His journey northward to the "*Lost sheep of Israel*" (Matthew 15:24).

Samaria

"He must needs go through Samaria" (John 4:4).

After eight months of ministry in Judea, the time had come for Jesus to travel into Galilee.

- The imprisonment of John (Matthew 4:12),
- Jesus' growing popularity with the masses, no doubt as a result of His miracles rather than His teaching, and consequently
- a more open hostility by the Pharisees occasioned His departure (John 4:1).

Why must He go through Samaria? Though it was the more direct route linking Judea with Galilee, the Jews, as a rule, crossed the Jordan River and traveled through Perea. The relationship between the Jews and Samaritans was estranged (John 4:9); there was a history of open hostility between the two as well as religious differences that led F. L. Godet to comment,

"It would be strange ... that Jesus should have been left there, absolutely alone (at the well) in the midst of a hostile population."

On His return to Judea some months later, Jesus would strictly forbid His disciples from taking the shorter route through Samaria (Matthew 10:5) and He Himself met with Samaritan resistance (Luke 9:51-53) that dictated that the longer route across the Jordan was the wiser choice. But why must He travel on this occasion through Samaria? Was He in a hurry? Perhaps, simply, Samaritan hostility did not threaten Him. Perhaps, His disciples needed to learn the lesson of Divine protection. All of these seem very weak

explanations.

Unknown to the woman who went to the Well of Jacob at the noon hour that clear December day for her own reasons, Divine providence had made an appointment for her with the Messiah and Savior of the world (John 4:42).

John 4:1-42 is a record of that one-on-one encounter between God and someone in need of His personal touch.

Five details in the narrative suggest that this Samaritan woman was deeply troubled:

1. She came alone to the well instead of at six o'clock when other ladies would be there as well to draw water (John 4:6).

2. She had been married, and more likely divorced than widowed, five times and now had decided to simply "live in" with her gentleman friend (John 4:18).

3. She came to Jacob's Well, though in Samaria at that time there were many wells. This particular well at the base of Mt. Gerizim had great religious significance for her (John 4: 20).

4. She was a religious woman somewhat versed in Samaritan creed as well as knowledgeable of certain religious terms (John 4:25), and although this point alone seemed to bear no particular importance, in the present context, it has a remarkable resemblance to what is characteristic of someone who, in search of the meaning to life, returns to the House of God.

5. Most significant of all was the testimony of Jesus, Whose ability to view the human heart openly, saw a thirst that He alone could quench.

Jesus came to a Samaritan woman. Here are two details that must not be overlooked.

- Not only do Jews have no dealings with Samaritans, but

- Jewish men do not carry on conversations with women in public -- not even their wives.

"Jesus did not share this particularistic spirit," observed one scholar.

If Jesus ever had reasons not to counsel with someone it was here, and He could add another reason. He was fatigued (John 4: 6). Hungry, thirsty and totally exhausted; He rested Himself on the well. But "the arrival of this woman, at so unusual an hour, had undoubtedly been for Jesus the signal of a work to be done," remarks Godet.

As a Master at evangelizing, Jesus directs the conversation to spiritual things in general and then to those spiritual needs in particular within this woman's life. He then had the answer -- living water that so totally quenches those emotional and spiritual thirsts of the soul that this woman, as all of us, need never thirst again. He who drinks of it will never again be dependent on external sources of satisfaction -- for it shall flow out of his innermost parts in torrents of inner and immediate satisfaction. Living water, unlike water in a cistern, is a supply that is constantly flowing and replenishing itself.

Flowing water, in contrast to stagnant water, is pure and not only quenches thirst but provides healing and purification to the one who drinks it regularly. The fountains of living water within are not only an internal source of spiritual and emotional refreshing but, because they flow, the source will never be exhausted, Also, while satisfying, they heal and purify the soul.

Jesus finally brings the conversation around to Himself as the giver of this living water and adds new meaning to

the term "Messiah."

What follows is a remarkable event in our Savior's life. The Savior appears to rub salt into the ethical wound already created by His conversation with the Samaritan woman. He stayed 2 days to bring many others to a clearer revelation of Himself and His mission.

Verses 35 through 38 of John 4 give insight into Jesus' remarkable view of things and His interest in even the salvation of the Gentiles. The whitened fields are the harvest of Samaritan souls in which He personally sowed the seed of the Word and from which the apostles themselves, in present and future ministry, will have an abundant harvest. Godet again adds a conclusion to this story:

"The eager welcome which Jesus found among the Samaritans is an example of the effect which the coming of Christ should have produced among His own (the Jewish nation). The faith of these strangers was the condemnation of Israel's unbelief. It was, undoubtedly, under this impression that Jesus, after those two exceptional days in His earthly existence, resumed His journey to Galilee."

Upon His return into Galilee, Jesus' reception was predictably warm. His Judean ministry had not gone unnoticed (John 4:43-45). In effect, it guaranteed for Him an open door of opportunity to preach in many of their synagogues. Thus, He overcame the lack of respect which, as a matter of course, stigmatized a fellow Galilean-- a prophet has no honor in his own country. His fame, with the news of His return, reached as far as Capernaum (John 4:46-47) which borders the province on the northeast by the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. His coming "*made a sensation.*"

Although this open invitation to preach was Jesus' primary interest, Galilean insensitivity to His pulpit ministry, together with their marked enthusiasm for signs

and wonders, would inevitably and soon close the door (Mark 1:45).

It was this epitaph that would eventually be inscribed on their stony hearts, (John 4:48 "Unless ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe", the engraving reads). "*You must have signs*," Jesus observed, "not just signs but such as inspire awe and wonder."

Godet sums the point well,

"Indeed, the disposition which Jesus thus meets at the moment when He sets foot on Israelitish soil, is the tendency to see in Him only a thaumaturge (worker of miracles): and He is so much the more painfully affected since He has just passed two days in Samaria, in contact with an altogether opposite spirit."

Gallilee

On His way to Nazareth (Luke 4:16), He stopped in Cana and, no doubt, taught in the synagogue there (Luke 4:15). It was here He performed His second miracle in Galilee (John 4:54), the healing of the nobleman's son. This healing, however, does not mark the official commencement of His first tour of Galilee. The account bears another significance. It is a simple recording of the relative openness of heart and mind (John 4:53) that in general characterized the citizens of Capernaum, the nobleman's residence. It is in direct contrast to that attitude prevalent in Nazareth where He was going and from which He would soon be forcibly and bodily evicted (Luke 4:28, 29).

It was no wonder that Jesus would thereupon move to Capernaum (Matthew 4:13) with His mother and brothers -- perhaps even for their immediate protection. In addition, Capernaum was a city of commerce located on the route of the caravans coming from Damascus. It was in some ways the Jewish capital of Galilee. To quote Godet,

"Jesus would have less narrow prejudices to meet there than at Nazareth, and many more opportunities to propagate the Gospel."

Capernaum was also the residence of Peter and Andrew not far from the place where John and James were employed as fishermen. Mark, who was not generally given to too much detail--in fourteen brief chapters, he overviewed Jesus' entire ministry--nonetheless, narrated the activity of those initial days for Jesus in Capernaum (Mark 1:16-37).

As Jesus, Himself, had required moments alone with

His immediate family to say His farewells and give an explanation for His vision and uncommon interests, so must His disciples. Zebedee must give his sons, James and John, over to a Divine calling (Mark 1:20) though, no doubt, like Peter and Andrew (their counterparts), they were the family's hope for "carrying on" the fishing business.

The record is warm and sensitive (Mark 1:29-31). Peter had difficult personal decisions to make regarding his future. Whereupon, Jesus accepted an invitation to dine at Peter's home. It is so important for the family to meet this Jesus Who has so captured the heart and mind of their Simon and to personally experience His healing touch.

After spending the night in prayer--an event that always preceded a major undertaking by our Lord--(Mark 1:35), Mark 1:39 marks the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

Jesus' ministry in Capernaum was an ever widening circle. The local residents alone were sufficient in number to press Him to the Sea (Luke 5:1). Soon, however, Syria, and the people across the Jordan heard (Matthew 4:24-25). Soon, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea were making the 70 mile journey north to receive him. Though His popularity was mushrooming (Mark 1:28) and not hundreds but rather thousands came to see Him (and some to hear Him) the emphasis of His ministry continued to be the three point sermon (Mark 1:15) with which he had started. Also, His place of ministry remained the local synagogue from whose pulpit He spoke with resolute authority (Mark 1:22).

Things did not just "happen" though. Jesus prayerfully anticipated each opportunity (Mark 1:35), and followed the route from town to town (Mark 1:38) that was Divinely predetermined for Him. Unlike Nazareth, which had been

an isolated incident (Luke 4:28-29), city after city welcomed Him (Luke 4:15).

How long He continued visiting the synagogues of Galilee, we can only conjecture. There were upwards to 200 towns in Galilee and thousands of inhabitants, as well as the crowds that came from the neighboring provinces. Perhaps a few months, perhaps over a year, Jesus was engaged in healing the physically sick and delivering the mentally and spiritually oppressed (Mark 1:34, 39). And then it happened, the single event that would bring His first tour of Galilee to as abrupt a conclusion as it had begun.

Mark 1:40 "There came a leper to Him ... "

To A. T. Robertson, one word characterizes the scene -- *Excitement*. Countless demons had been by this time exorcised. Thousands, no doubt, had been healed of various diseases reflecting every area of human need. In all of this, nothing seemed extra ordinary or out of the usual. Matthew, himself, quoted Isaiah (Matthew 8:17) to lend support to the fact that all was as it should have been. But the theologian had forgotten about the leper. Luke, the physician, diagnosed this man's leprosy as advanced (Luke 5:12).

He was soon to die but Jesus healed him. No account is more descriptive and revealing of the tender compassions of the Divine heart nor as typical of the misdirected excitement of one who having been touched by the Lord, rushes out, contrary to the voice of wisdom, to change the world.

The compassion that moved Jesus to action (Mark 1:41) is Scripturally shown to be solely a Divine impulse. Man without God is not capable of experiencing such a depth of mercy, such a stirring of the heart and soul to reach out and touch someone. But reach out and touch him, Jesus did,

though he was untouchable --unclean -- through leprosy.

With his healing, however, Jesus gave stern and exact instructions (Mark 1:44), "See thou say nothing to any man." Jesus knew what the news of this healing could do to His pulpit ministry in the synagogue. Mark 1:45 records the end of the matter. Before this incident was noised abroad, the crowds came. Now, however, (Luke 5:15) great multitudes thronged Him-preventing Him from even entering the broad market places of the Galilean towns, much less the humble synagogue which from now on could not begin to house the masses that sought Him.

To paraphrase Mark 2:1 "*He went home ...* " and rightly so, for a greater danger had to be avoided. As H. B. Swete observed,

"How grave the danger which Jesus sought to avert ultimately became is apparent from John 6:15." They would inevitably seek to crown Him King.

Luke records Jesus' last act of this first tour. How wisely the Savior moved (Luke 5:16)-"*And he withdrew Himself into the wilderness and PRAYED.*"

Capernaum

"*The first circuit (of Galilee) is now over,*" says H. B. Swete, "*ended perhaps prematurely by the indiscretion of the leper; ... the Lord returns to Capernaum.*" (Mark 2:1). Mark, together with testimony from Luke's Gospel, related what happened next. When Jesus finally returned home, he was met by the first official delegation of Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem and Galilee. This is the first recorded appearance of the Scribes according to Matthew, Mark and Luke--at least the first of any significance in Galilee.

H. B. Swete further notes,

"The local Galilean Rabbis had now been reinforced by others from the capital, some of them possibly members of the Sanhedrin (Mark 3:22). The suspicions of the Pharisees of Jerusalem had been aroused before Jesus left Judea (John 4:1,2) and they had decided to watch His movements in Galilee (John 1:19, 24)."

Jesus was being observed and questioned by religious leaders whose critical attitude and fanatical adherence to their own peculiar interpretation of scripture made them potentially dangerous. Of greater concern were the crowds who paid Him homage by showing up at His front door and inviting themselves to the meeting. Home for Jesus had ceased to be the place to "get away" and rest. In resignation to this, He invited them in to listen as He conversed with the Clergy (Mark 2:2).

In the Providence of God, the scene was set. The crowd was innumerable (Mark 2:2). The various schools of religious thought were well represented (Luke 5:17). And ... oh yes ... the power of God was present to heal

(Luke 5:17). The Scribes were seated, probably in the place of honor near the Teacher. Others continued to press inward to hear. On the roof directly above Jesus, four men, who would be renowned for their simple and persistent faith on behalf of their paralyzed friend, were busy "digging up" the tiles (Mark 2:4). Moments later with the paralytic lowered in front of Him, Jesus would be given the opportunity to demonstrate the doctrine He expounded.

The main point of this account is not to be found in this man's physical healing. It is rather the astonishing statement Jesus made in the presence of His distinguished guests,

"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ... " (Mark 2: 5)

Analyze the sentence briefly.

1. In the first case, Jesus addressed the man with "Son" which is better translated "Child"--a very warm and affectionate term--intended (according to one scholar) "to cheer (him) and win (his) confidence."

2. Secondly, mark the word "forgiven". Its use here points out how permanently, and immediately this man had been completely forgiven of all his sin: past, present, and future. The record of his offenses against God had been erased.

A ripple of low murmuring rumbled back and forth across the room. (Mark 2: 6)

"How can this man say such a thing? Only God can forgive sin ... This is blasphemous "

Jesus knew what their response would be (Mark 2:8). In fact, the word "reasoning" which Mark uses describes it. This word first suggests that the religious leaders in attendance came with a critical spirit ready to question His authority. They were not open to hear Him. Consequently, they were prepared beforehand to criticize His actions and

teachings. Inevitably, this attitude would lead to open hostility against Him.

"Which is easier," Jesus responded, *"to forgive him or to heal him????"*

To the Pharisee, it was easier to say, *"You are forgiven."* It did not seem possible for Jesus to demonstrate or prove that in fact this man was, in the eyes of God, totally forgiven. The Pharisee and the Scribe would argue that these were mere words, powerless words, that, to the ignorant masses ready to crown Him King, sounded almost believable. Only God can forgive and to their understanding, this was Joseph's son--not God's--and therefore, He, Jesus, had spoken out of turn and with great disrespect for God. This was blasphemy.

Jesus knew Who He was. He also knew that the power to heal this man physically was already present. The task, however, of providing total forgiveness through His upcoming death on the Roman Cross would be far more difficult. His answer was the opposite to that of His learned guests. As was noted by H. B. Swete,

"The healing of the physical disorder was secondary and made less demand on His power."

Healing was secondary. Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness clearly showed that His primary interest was in the soul of the man and his spiritual healing. In point of fact, Jesus was prepared to prove this. He would heal the paralytic as a sign of His authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).

"Take your cot and go home." (Mark 2:11)

Such an uncommon way to heal and yet, in the present instance such a clear display of the absolute authority by which Jesus also forgives sins.

In any case, whether or not the Pharisees could accept

His authority, the paralytic according to Luke (Luke 5:25) was the first to glorify God for his total healing. His spontaneous enthusiasm was contagious, as the Pharisees feared. As waves rippling out from the center of the pond where the water has been disturbed, this man's praises and the testimony of his healing, in ever widening circles, spread through the crowd. "*In so much*," Mark noted, (Mark 2:12) "*that they were all amazed and glorified God.*" Luke agreed (Luke 5:26) but with greater emphasis. According to his sources, the entire crowd, without exception, in ecstasy, and with solemn respect admitted, "*How unusual today has been.*" (This Jesus had been with them since childhood and yet they did not know Him. He had preached in their synagogue, but now they were not sure if all along they had been listening.) They lingered in speechless amazement. What about the Pharisees? His relationship with them as a group was clearly estranged. From now on Jesus would be on the defensive.

By The Sea

"And He went forth again by the seaside," Mark continues, *"and all the multitude resorted unto Him."* The account -- as always -- is picturesque and alive with meaning. On this occasion, teaching was not His main interest (Matthew and Luke make no mention of it.) While Jesus walked beside the sea, at intervals through the day, others came to walk beside Him and listen.

His main intention, however, was clear. He was on His way to the Great West Road which led to Damascus. At the border of Galilee, He would reach the tollbooths where a tariff on incoming goods was being collected for the treasury of the Tetrarch, Herod Antipas, who, under Roman rule, governed Galilee. Seated among the other tax collectors was the one Jesus came to see, Matthew. Jesus' ensuing call to Matthew to follow was to Jerome an attestation of *"the magnetic power (Jesus) exerted on men by His unique personality."*

It is difficult to believe that Matthew would have no understanding of the work for which the Master was becoming well known. Notwithstanding whatever bits of information Matthew collected to help him in this final decision to forsake all for the call of God, no other example is as noteworthy for us. "The command was practically a call to discipleship," remarked Swete,

"Involving the complete abandonment of his work. Disciples, who were fishermen, could return to their fishing at pleasure (John 21:3); not so the tax collector who forsook his post."

Matthew was selected to be one of the twelve, but that appointment would await another day. Today, however, Jesus would accept the invitation to dine at his home with a

number of other publicans--as they were also called--undoubtedly Matthew's closest, and perhaps only, friends.

If forgiving a paralytic was a ripple in the waters of controversy, dining at the home of a tax collector had to be a tidal wave. Tax farmers, as they were also called, were feared and highly disliked. An understanding of their blatant and almost total lack of professional ethics and common consideration explains why. Tollbooths were everywhere. Taxes were collected for any reason that seemed plausible, and whatever amount that could be collected over and above the sum set by the government became profit to the tax collector. (Zaccheus' promise to the Master to pay back four times the amount taken through fraud and deceit gives indication of the abuses this "profession" had indulged in.) There was a poll tax or per capita tax. There was a duty on goods and materials brought into a territory. There was a sales tax, and in Jerusalem a tax on leases. These taxes were not only high (in Gaza, for example, the tax on trade was 25%) but there were bribes given to those tax collectors who aided corrupt businessmen in cheating the government. Incidentally, bookkeeping was virtually unknown. Whatever records were kept no doubt reflected more what the collector "wanted" written rather than what was actually transacted.

Tax farmers were accused--perhaps rightly so--of inordinate greed. They were called "*dogs ... sucking up everything and never satisfied.*" They were even equated with sleep--another inevitable that robs one of half his life. It was a debate in Israel: How far a house becomes unclean when tax collectors and thieves enter it. Such abuses were practiced by many recognized legitimate government officials, but there were also charlatans who posed as tax collectors without any state authorization. It's no wonder that Israel, in Old Testament times, took a word meaning

"to be harassed" (I Samuel 13:6) and translated it "to exact tribute" (2 Kings 23:35).

With the publicans at Matthew's table, Gentiles were also seated. To the Pharisee this accented the offense. ("Sinners" -- Mark 2: 15 -- was a term used to distinguish Gentiles from Jews. The Jew who had gone astray was known as a "transgressor" of the Law but never a "sinner.") To eat with Gentiles was an offense recognized even by the Pharisaic Christians (Acts 11:3; I Corinthians 5:11).

"The strong need no physician, but those that are sick. I have come to call the sinner unto repentance," Jesus explained (Luke 5:32).

Such remarks, however, expressing as they did the deepest concern and affection for the soul in need of healing, seemed to the Pharisaic heart to rationalize away a most obvious transgression. (They held this incident in memory for future reference.)

The account would not be complete without a note from Matthew's personal recollections. He remembered Jesus adding, "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*" Perhaps to Mark and Luke, Jesus' quoting Hosea 6:6 was either not known or not significant to their report. However, for Matthew, it was the center of the matter, and forever engraved in his memory. It was he whom the Master called! It was he who needed the physician of the soul! Hosea 6:6 is in point of fact the only adequate explanation as to why Jesus risked reputation and life to be an honored guest at Matthew's table; why He, Jesus, expressed so little regard for the Pharisees' traditions and interpretation of Scripture; why He seemed so unconcerned when this single act could arouse a nation, Israel, against Him. He was doing what came naturally.

"Learn this," Jesus quickly responded, "I am not interested in your sacrifices. They have come to represent--not your humble obedience to the Law but--your religious prejudices and

superior attitude over those you have chosen to exclude from your inner circle.. I am interested in mercy."

The calling of Matthew for us is a striking example of how far the merciful love of God must extend itself to reach us. Short of the Cross itself, it is a record of the price that had to be paid and the pain endured by Christ to bring us to Himself.

It would be unfair to give the impression that Bible scholars are totally agreed on the ORDER of the events that follow. This disagreement lies in the fact that the four Gospels are themselves records, in part, of different events recorded in varying order depending on the theme and emphasis of the individual writers. Henry Alford confessed,

"... when we come to arrange (the Gospel writers') texts side by side, to supply clause with clause, and endeavor to construct a complete history of details out of them, we at once find ourselves involved in ... difficulties "

However difficult the task, as long as the accuracy of the four writers is not challenged and we, to quote H. Alford again, "simply and reverentially receive their records", studying the four accounts as one continues to be rewarding. A comparative study of the Gospels provides for us a closer look at that particular context in which our Lord lived and which often provided the interpretation to His remarks and actions that we are endeavoring to understand.

Without refuting the opinions of those scholars in disagreement with us, nor taking the space in this writing to defend our position with arguments already established by still other scholars, as regards chronology, we can only rehearse the events in an order that seems to us clear and evident. Mark's Gospel is brief and makes no claim to chronology. Matthew clearly revealed an interest in grouping the details of Jesus' ministry under various headings, such as: Teachings (chapters 5-7); parables

(chapter 13); and prophecy (chapters 24 and 25). In only a few places does his record read like a story and parallel the other Gospels. John's Gospel--in a somewhat refreshing way--relates details not found in the others. These entwine with the Synoptic account, i.e., the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to give a more detailed though not complete history.

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did," John concluded (John 21:25) "which, if they should be written ... , I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

It is to Luke we are indebted for pointing the way to what happened next in the Story. As an historian, he recorded the events "*in order*" (Luke 1: 3). In his sixth chapter, we resume our journey in a continuing search for the next--though, at times, the somewhat faded--footprints of Jesus in the sands of the Gospel Record.

Gallilee

The weeks between Jesus' first and second tours of Galilee, faithfully recorded by Mark (chapter 3) and Luke (chapters 6 & 7), were a significant interlude in our Lord's ministry. This was a time set aside for re-defining old relationships and making new ones. The diary of this period was kept in the heart of Peter, who related his story to the Gospel writer, Mark. It would show clearly that the developing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders was not going to go away. His relationship with them was deteriorating. To the Pharisees, the battle lines had been drawn. The differences between our Lord and them became increasingly more apparent.

Though the Law, for example, required only one day of fasting, the Day of Atonement, stricter Jews and Pharisees, in particular, observed two fast days weekly. Perhaps Matthew's dinner party had fallen on one of those days, Sunday or Wednesday, and while the disciples of stricter schools were fasting, Jesus' disciples were feasting (Mark 2:18-22) in direct disrespect for this common practice--not required in Torah.

The Sabbath returned and with it the memorable incident in the Corn field (Mark 2:23-28). Jesus and His disciples, in no contradiction to the Law (Deuteronomy 23:24), were making their way through the standing corn, eating as they went. According to the Pharisees, their hands were instruments of reaping and they were in violation of the Law that forbids work of any sort on the Sabbath (Exodus 34:21). If these occasions seemed subject to interpretation, the healing of the man with a withered hand

the following Sabbath day would be conclusive (Mark 3:1-6). According to the Rabbinical rule, relief might be given to a sufferer on the Sabbath only when life was in danger. The anger and grief, a most painful blend of emotions, welled up within our Lord and overflowed. In their opinion, this healing could have waited.

Jesus' response was more than thought provoking (Mark 3:4). "*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save or to kill?*" Jesus raised the startling alternative. His question was rhetorical and needed no answer. "*If good may not be done on the Sabbath, are you prepared to justify evildoing on that day?*" In other words: "*It is unlawful for Me to heal, while it is perfectly right for you in private session to plot my death!!!*"

His inner pain over the hardness of their hearts became quickly evident in His searching glance around the circle of observers. The healing followed then almost as a matter of course. The meaning of Mark 3:6 must not be overlooked.

"The Pharisees immediately took counsel with the Herodians against Him."

Herodians, whose political ambitions reflected their strong desire to "hang-on" to King Herod's little dynasty in Israel, were politically opposite the Pharisees, who fought for national freedom. As Luke reported (6:11) "*They were filled with madness.*" They accused Jesus (Mark 3:22) of being in league with the Devil. They would go to any length--as they did in using Antipas as an ally and acting as his emissaries (Luke 23:2)--to see Jesus destroyed. Unless the common people would back him, Jesus stood very much alone. It was into the crowd that He retreated for protection.

The Mount of Beatitudes

Jesus withdrew to the Sea (Mark 3:7) for He knew the intentions of the Pharisees. H. B. Swete concluded.

"(He) withdrew from the town to the seaside because He was aware of the plot. He and His would be safer on the open beach surrounded by crowds of followers, than in the narrow streets of Capernaum. His friends would prevent an arrest, and in the case of danger, a boat was at hand..."

The fame of Jesus' miracles, according to Mark (3:7), and teachings, according to Luke (6:17), brought the crowds together from the four directions. They increased in number as He went. As the testimony of His healing power reached the ears of those farther away, they too came. As the day progressed, they gathered until the instrument of Divine protection, itself, became a means of danger. So, a boat was to keep close to the shore, moving when He moved so as to be ready at any moment to receive Him (Mark 3:9). The crowds had developed a theology of touching (Luke 6:19). Convinced that their healing was conditioned on making physical contact with the Master, they threw themselves on Him in their eagerness. They pushed and shoved ever closer and closer.

Jesus did not shrink from contact with the humanity He loved and for which He had come to die. However, the boat in waiting was a provision against a very real danger. They--beyond doubt but--unintentionally would have pushed Him into the sea.

Demoniacs too were crying wildly, screaming and throwing themselves at His feet (Mark 3:11, 12). It was a scene of growing enthusiasm for the crowds and growing concern for the Master. Somehow in the course of things,

He managed to withdraw (perhaps by means of the boat, though that is not clear) and making His way to a neighboring mountain, He ascended into prayer (Luke 6:12). This was undoubtedly His intention in the first place. It would be here in the Mount in prayer that He would be given to know the Father's choices for the inner circle of twelve disciples, later to be called apostles. Over a year had past since Jesus had been introduced to many of His disciples. They had walked with Him observing whatever glimpses of His glory were granted them through His healing and teaching ministries. However, they, themselves, had been, otherwise, uninvolved. Twelve of them must be chosen for a more specific calling. Eleven of them will be responsible for continuing the work which He had begun. It would require time to train them, time to strengthen their incredibly weak faith, time to explain the plan of redemption of which they were chosen to be eyewitnesses. By design, these twelve would be included on Jesus' second tour of Galilee, soon to begin (Luke 8:1), not as spectators -- as before -- but as trainees for future ministry (Mark 3: 14).

The "12" seemed to have so little in common. They came from different backgrounds. Four of them were fishermen, two were first cousins to the Master. One was a tax collector, another, Simon, was a Zealot. Still another, Philip, from his name to his associates (John 12:21) gave every indication of being very familiar with Greek culture. They differed in temperament as well. Thomas needed Divine help with his pessimism while Bartholomew or Nathaniel seem to have no personality flaw (John 1:47). And one was a thief -- so John informs us (John 12:6).

They did have one thing in common though: a strong desire for the Master. In his essay *The Twelve Men*, dealing with the British Jury System, G. K. Chesterton

wrote,

"Whenever our civilization wants a library to be catalogued, or a solar system discovered, or any other trifle of this kind, it uses up its specialists. But when it wishes anything done which is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing around. The same thing was done, if I remember right, by the Founder of Christianity."

Upon descending the Mount, Jesus delivered His now famed "Sermon on the Mount." His comments were directed at these men He had just singled out. This sermon in effect was the first lesson on "The Calling of God, its qualifications and its price. Bishop Sheen gives the message in capsule form:

"The Sermon on the Mount is so much at variance with all that our world holds dear that the world will crucify anyone who tries to live up to its values. Because Christ preached them, He had to die Calvary was the price He paid for the Sermon on the Mount ... Those who heard Him preach the Beatitudes were invited to stretch themselves out on a cross ... Crucifixion cannot be far away when a teacher says "woe" to the rich, the satiated, the gay and the popular (Luke 6:24-26). (Jesus) lived out the Sermon on the Mount on Golgotha ... He died full of the opposite of the four woes: poor, abandoned, sorrowful, and despised. On the Mount of Beatitudes, He bade men hurl themselves on the cross of self-denial; on the Mount of Calvary, He embraced that very cross. Though the shadow of the cross would not fall across the place of the Skull until ... later, it was already in His heart the day He preached on "How to be Happy."

The crowds had assembled to hear Him as before (Luke 6:17) but even the Savior had, from time to time, human needs that had to be taken care of. Luke simply recorded that after His sermon (7:1), He intended to return Home. Mark's account is more vivid (Mark 3:19-21). He had need of nourishment, but the crowds prevented Him and His disciples from eating. The situation was, in the opinion of Mary, His mother, far more critical. She and His brothers agreed that His zeal was "out of control." As A. T. Robertson so aptly put it

"(His) mother and brothers (came) to take Him home."

The Crusade For the Souls of Men/39

For all intent and purpose, His second tour of Galilee had unofficially begun. The needs of those who gathered about Him would not let Him wait one day's rest before He would be thrust into the middle of this great sea of human suffering. It was, however, the perfect time to confirm to John the Baptist who had been spending these past months in prison, that this Jesus was in action as well as word, the Messiah that is to come (Luke 7:18-23).

Capernaum

Aside from Luke, only Matthew--and then, only in part--related any details surrounding our Lord's return to Capernaum from the foot of the Mount "of Beatitudes." This is a page in the history of our Lord's earthly sojourn which Luke felt impressed to include. According to his account, these events recorded in his seventh chapter just precede the period of intense activity that is so vividly described in Mark, chapter three, verses 20 to 35.

Jesus had just ended what was undoubtedly a lengthy discourse and was returning home for some rest. A delegation of Jewish elders from Capernaum, feeling indebted to the Roman centurion stationed there who financed the building of their local synagogue, came to Jesus with an urgent request that our Lord repay the centurion's liberality by healing his servant who was otherwise certain to die. How refreshing to meet this centurion who sensed no such need for recognition. Being familiar with the rule that any Jew who entered a Gentile home would be defiled, concerned only with the healing of his beloved servant (Both Matthew and Luke use the warm term "son" to describe the relationship), and being a soldier familiar with the concept of authority, he felt it sufficient that Jesus only speak the word and his servant would be healed.

Jesus was astonished (Luke 7:9). Was our Lord not expecting this encounter? Was His heart just now painfully struck with the realization that this was the very ingredient absent from the hearts of His own people, the faith to trust the authority of His word to provide for their need and the

faith to trust Him to care enough to speak that Word. For the Master, it was simply wonderful to meet such an individual. Matthew remembered our Lord's ecstatic proclamation on this occasion regarding the conversion of the Gentiles--no doubt including this centurion (Matthew 8:11):

"... many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven "

The following day, living still in the glow of that most pleasant experience, Jesus was found a few miles to the south of Capernaum near the poor village of Nain. Here, He came upon the funeral procession for a young man--perhaps, in his early twenties (so the word used in Luke 7:14 suggests). His mother, a widow now bereaved of her only child, notwithstanding the crowds about her, must find her solitary way to the grave. It is a pain known to God. It is not difficult to believe that the Father sensing already in a somewhat personal way the grief of this lonely widow over the death of her "only begotten" son (John 3:16) directed the footsteps of His own Son to the scene. Motivated with deep compassion, Jesus spoke to the woman. "*Don't cry,*" He gently comforted her, knowing what He was about to do. He, thereupon, did not simply raise the lad. The record testifies, " ... *He delivered him to his mother.*" Can there possibly be recorded anywhere a clearer account of our God's sensitivity to human suffering?

This was, however, only an example of the tender mercies of the Lord. The disciples of John the Baptist who, at this time, came to Jesus for further enlightenment regarding our Lord's Messiahship would receive many more examples to bring to their imprisoned teacher (Luke 7:18-23). John the Baptist was soon to be martyred for the heavenly cause. It is not surprising at all to find recorded

here (Luke 7:24-35) our Lord's eulogy for this beloved prophet and personal friend.

The chapter closes with Jesus, again, invited to dinner. This time, it was the home of a Pharisee named Simon (Luke 7:44). Jesus gave evidence here that He was indeed no respecter of persons. Whether the home of a tax collector or that of a Pharisee, He could move about freely in His unbiased love of souls. The story that follows in Luke (7:36-50) perhaps loses somewhat in the translation. Here, in one moment of ministry, is the very essence of the Savior's mission. Oh, to be there, and sense what really happened, focusing on a woman kneeling, broken, and silently weeping, at Jesus' feet" As the Spanish chorus sets forth, "*There is no higher place than at His feet.*" This woman was remarkable. She came to Him ...but not for a physical healing!!! She embraced His feet, kissing them, weeping over them and wiping them with her hair. In a display of reverence and uncommon devotion for the Master, she bathed His feet in the fragrance she carried in a flask which, no doubt, she intentionally brought with her for this purpose. John Peter Lange, viewing her impulsiveness, wrote,

"For a shorter or longer time she had already been looking for an opportunity to draw near to the Savior without being thrust back ... , and now when she hears that He is a guest in Simon's house, she is withheld as little by false shame as by fear of man from following the drawing of her heart."

"*Thy sins be forgiven thee,*" Jesus responded.

Jesus might have again brought controversy with the forgiving of sins. This time, however, He was among friends. A parable was in order to emphasize what had just taken place, and to "clear the air" of any misunderstanding among His disciples. He spoke of a certain creditor with two debtors : one representing Simon and the other, this woman, both of whom were "frankly" forgiven (Luke

7:41). It was not the greatness of the debt of this woman's sin that Jesus was emphasizing, as if to imply that Simon was any less a sinner or any less in need of forgiveness. Rather, it was the greatness of the woman's awareness of her debt or how much she felt her need of God's mercy that translated into her deep affection for the Savior at that moment. The more deeply and decisively the repentance, the more intense and genuine the devotion to God for His forgiveness. We are grateful to Luke for his insight into this brief period of spiritual refreshing for the Master. Against the backdrop of a growing Galilean indifference to Jesus' true mission, there was from time to time in the center of things, one soul whose faith was genuine. There were those few individuals who seemed almost to have the ability to read His heart. They almost surmised why He came. These days had to be most meaningful for Him. Refreshed, Jesus was ready now to face Galilee for a second time.

Gallilee

It is not at all strange to read (Mark 4:34)

"But without a parable spake He not unto them, and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples."

The parable is a welcomed idea. While Jesus continues to herald the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, the Pharisees, whose hostility might otherwise prematurely rupture, are kept in a state of agitated confusion. They would have used His words against Him, had they only understood what He was saying. Not only did the parable keep the religious leaders "at bay," but Jesus also was healing fewer and fewer people during this time (Mark 5:5). This was necessary so that He could privately explain His parables to his disciples and the others whose dedication to Him was, as far as Luke was concerned (Luke 8:2,3) noteworthy.

What a privilege to learn the mystery of the Kingdom of God!! What a privilege to spend "endless" hours on some secluded hillside with the Savior while He unraveled a mystery which later Paul exclaimed, "*.... had been hid from ages and from generations ...* (Colossians 1:26).

The parable of the Sower was so vivid in the recollections of His disciples that it was the first to be recorded. It best explains the situation. The "*wayside*" listeners of His teachings were the crowds who hearing the Word longed to crown Him their King, but afterward, having it violently snatched from their hearts, they cried angrily that He should be crucified. The "*stony places*" were the hearts of still others who displayed at first an interest for His message. Later, however, the lack of depth

to their commitment to follow the Master became evident, when the seeds of truth, in which they may have briefly expressed interest, died within them. Others were simply dedicated to pleasure. The fruit of "temperance," being as it was in direct confrontation with this principle by which they lived, they could not possibly "*come to perfection.*" Not only the fruit of the Spirit, but the very Tree of God's Word was strangled. Only a few, a dozen men and a handful of women, were prepared to receive the Truth.

Yet, even parables have a limited use. Mark noted (Mark 4:33) that the Savior had His reasons for "shorter" sermons. The Pharisees, no doubt, were more easily offended. The crowds, whose primary interest had been in the healing line that used to follow His message, were understandably unable to retain their interest in what to them had become vague and meaningless (Luke 8:10). The course of Jesus' ministry had clearly taken a sharp turn. In terms of His popularity and mass healings, this second tour was definitely anti-climatic. Things would no longer be as they were. Just a "*few sick folk,*" Mark commented, "*were healed*" (Mark 6:5).

On The Sea

The dynamic display of the power of God through Jesus during His first visit to their towns made the Galilean rejection of the Savior's message all the more inexcusable. A second visit in the same fashion would prove nothing. One can only wonder, how many of His parables were taught while He sat in the safety of the boat (Mark 4:1) beyond the reach of their outstretched arms searching for a physical healing that now alluded them.

In terms, however, of His ministry to the twelve, this tour with them at His side was a singular success. It was for them in particular that this trip was made. It would prove to be a learning experience so vital for their upcoming ministry (Luke 9:2). (Without Him physically beside them, the Savior would later send them out by twos.) Not only would there be more private time that was necessary to explain to them the message of the Kingdom, which soon they would themselves herald throughout Galilee, but there was an immediate need for them to learn to trust Him. Success in the work of God is related to a keen sense of humble dependence upon Him, the Source of strength and wisdom. Figuratively speaking, only faith in Him would bring their ship to shore.

What better way to learn the figurative than by the literal. Jesus instructed them to take the boat out to sea. A storm was scheduled to arrive somewhere out there in the middle. Much time is spent in debating whether it is the Lord or the Devil who brings storms. It is sufficient to say, whatever or whoever the cause, the chief question that one should ask themselves is, "*How well did my faith brave the*

wind and the wave?" Henry Alford observed that Mark's account (Mark 4:35-41) of the stilling of the storm "*is so rich in additional particulars, as to take the highest rank among the three (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as to precision.*"

"*As He was,*" Mark begins -- that is without any preparation for the journey -- they put to sea. Others followed in small boats, which seem to have been separated from the Lord and His disciples in the gale. "*These were probably scattered by the storm or soon turned back again,*" H. B. Swete conjectured. There soon arose a cyclonic wind sweeping down upon the lake from the hills through the ravines on the west shore. The sea swelled and the waves in uninterrupted succession cast themselves against the boat and began to fill it. Jesus had fallen asleep. His day's work done and the task of navigating the boat belonging to others, He took the time to repose on the wooden headrest in the stern or rear of the ship, where He would not be in their way.

"*Teacher!*" they cried. (Luke adds the title "Master.") "*Master, Our Overseer; Our Protector ... You don't seem to care that we are soon to die! !!*"

Here, there is introduced through Mark, two phrases spoken by our Lord that do not naturally belong together. It is not difficult to believe that between saying "Peace" and "*Be still*" there was a pause. The words used dictate this explanation. Upon waking, Jesus rebuked the wind for its display of violence. "*Peace,*" He called to the wind. Being not particularly alarmed Himself, Jesus only needed to control the violence of the storm. Such a soft spoken word suggests that the Master Who controls all things, desired to calm more the anxiety of His twelve companions than the storm. The word, "Peace" was intended to show His

disciples that despite the wind and waves, His watchful Presence guaranteed them safe passage across. It was not sufficient. It was soon evident that their anxiety could not be calmed until the storm was completely over, until the sea was as calm as glass, until those ominous clouds overhead had blown elsewhere, and the setting sun was once again visible behind them. Their inability to trust Him, brought a gentle response from a loving Teacher Who knew all too well how much His pupils had yet to learn. Condescending for the time being to their need for a greater faith and realizing that their very weak faith in Him had been shaken, He addressed the storm a second time, "Be still!!!" (No where else in Scripture is a command written or expressed so strongly.) Its literal meaning is, "mussel your mouth ..and NOW!!!" (Some scholars maintain that Jesus said "peace" to the waves but "be still" to the wind.) And there was immediately a great calm.

Never again would they be so bold, even in moments of greatest fear, to accuse Him of not caring. The first lesson of Trust had been learned.

"· · · *-And they came to the other side...* " (Mark 5:1).

Gergesa

Crossing the Lake, they came to the land of the Gerasenes where the deliverance of the man from Gadara from his demonic tormentors would take place (Mark 5:1-13). More importantly, the disciples were about to receive a glimpse into a spiritual world little observed. Yet, it is the very plain upon which battles for the souls of men are fought. Men cherish their hard-won freedom in this world and fight endlessly to retain it. Yet, it was a spiritual war waged between Christ and the forces of darkness that determined whether or not there would be real freedom. It was our Savior's victory heralded in Scripture (Colossians 2:16) that won us true freedom --from the bondage of sin. Whether possessed of a legion of demons--as the account before us tells --or simply a sinner, the results, eternally speaking, are the same; the bondage is just as real; the need for a Savior just as necessary. Granted, the account before us is not a message on redemption in a general sense, but rather it shows us how severe the spiritual crisis is when the powers of evil are in charge.

It was this lesson that the twelve would be invited to learn. Together with the incident on the Lake--just experienced -- they would be given a rather simple but accurate picture of what the ministry was really all about. With a humble dependence upon the Lord for their provision and a clear understanding that theirs would not be a battle with the elements (what happened on the Lake was still vivid in their memory) nor people (the religious rulers or the Romans) but a spiritual warfare waged against the *"rulers of the darkness of this world ... "* (Ephesians 6:12),

they could go anywhere --even through Galilee -- and preach the message of the coming Kingdom of God.

It all began to happen "*immediately*" Mark related, when they reached the shore. This man, a "former" resident of a nearby town (Luke 8:27) --perhaps Gadara, situated six miles Southeast of the Lake --but now for some time an inhabitant of one of the tombs locally, "*when he saw Jesus,*" Luke adds, he came to meet him. What is remarkable is that this wretched man controlled in a most literal sense by an army of demons, nonetheless, could not be held back from meeting his Source of deliverance. Before Jesus, in obeisance, knelt a man whose naked form merely showed how utterly broken he was rationally, how thoroughly de-personalized and under the control of forces beyond his comprehension. Matthew's account simply called him insane and dangerous (Matthew 8:28). But he came. All the forces of Evil could not prevent his healing. This is a testimony to the grace of God. We can assume: void of any conscious effort to find Jesus or even know who the Savior is or how He might deliver him, the demoniac crosses paths with Jesus.

Matthew mentioned two individuals coming on this occasion. There is no conflict in the records, though. Not only was Jesus moving about in a world Satan claimed for himself (Matthew 4:9), but this area East of the Sea could easily have been characterized by excessive demonic activity as some parts of the world give clear indication today. It is far more difficult to believe that there was only one person in this condition--could we ever forget Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). The incident of delivering souls from demonic oppression was for Jesus all too common. However, this man with the legion stood to illustrate before His disciples this lesson of the power of darkness.

The concerned citizens of the region testified as well of this man's condition. They took every precaution to prevent the demoniac from hurting himself (Mark 5:5). They chained his hands together and placed his feet in shackles, but their efforts were fruitless. "*He took the chains,*" they cried in frightened bewilderment, "*and tore them to shreds. He took the shackles and crushed them like pottery!!!*" (Someone once said that a possessed/demonized --as it is called today -- person has the strength of ten men.) "*Night and day,*" the eyewitnesses confirmed, he would run through the hills with his agonizing screech breaking the silence, so terrifying in fact that no one would travel into the region (Matthew 8:28). His body was severely scarred from the stones he used to tear at his own flesh, almost as if in saner moments he attempted suicide only to be denied that escape by his tormentors. One can never be exactly sure how aware this man was of his own plight. He was at his worse when, as Luke the physician noted, "*... it caught him, ... and was driven of the devil.*"

Before Jesus had taken time to examine these matters, however, the Savior had commanded the legion to leave the man (Mark 5:8). The absoluteness of Our Lord's order may be questioned since the demons did not move but began to beg for some merciful consideration. (The words used in this account to note the Lord's command to the demons is not the strong and forceful verbiage we find in other accounts.) One is led to believe that IN TOTAL CONTRAST to Our Lord's general practice of simply expelling the demons, not permitting them to speak at all, Jesus engaged in a brief conversation here on purpose. It was intended only to reveal some depth to the spiritual problem before His disciples, and, since the record is so detailed, Christians will never hereafter need to go exploring for information on the subject. (Not only would

conversations with demons be an unwarranted investigation but, in point of fact, a very dangerous one that should be absolutely discouraged!)

"My name is Legion, for we are many ... " (Mark 5:9).

"A whole regiment of demons," John Peter Lange called it, and the one who spoke was their leader. In Roman military records in the time of Augustus a legion could be upwards to over 6800 men!!! The demons besought Christ ... much ... that He would not send them away (Mark 5:10). They feared being consigned to the abyss of eternal punishment before the time, Luke explained.

Perhaps verse 12 of Mark five could begin, *"They pleaded their case before Him ... Send us into the swine!"* they cried. Up to now, their leader was their spokesperson. Now in panic, *they all* spoke at once, *"Send us into the swine... please, send us into the swine ... send us into the swine,"* over and again they pleaded. They knew that on their own they could not inhabit these beasts. Jesus gave His permission. Not in an act of clemency or showing mercy but in condescending to the legitimacy of such a request, Jesus permitted the demons to infest the 2,000 swine feeding nearby.

As one, they had torn him. Now as one, they tore from him. The man from Gadara was free.

What about the swine? *"Driven to madness by a new and sudden impulse,"* Henry Swete noted, *"the herd rushed to its destruction."*

What happened to the legion? They would roam restlessly through the desert until opportunity came to torment another soul (Luke 11:24).

Those who tended the swine, in terror, fled into the town to report their loss of a herd and their gain of a fellow

countryman. Such a manifestation of the power of God was for the time too frightening to comprehend--notwithstanding that in evidence of the friendliness of this power, a man, once insane, was now sitting on the beach wearing clothes, free from the slavery of demonic passions, master of himself again.

The story does not end here. Although the man from Gadara besought the Lord to include him in the small band of followers, Jesus did not want him to come along. It would be this man's privilege to prepare the way for Jesus to come another day and at a less frightening time. He was commissioned--even before the Twelve -- to go throughout Decapolis, the ten Greek cities of Palestine, nine of which were on the East side of the Jordan -- to publicize this deliverance and promote Jesus' arrival among them. How simple an instruction by the Savior and yet how dynamic a witness: Go home and tell your friends of the great things the Lord has done for you and how compassionate He has been toward you. (Not just deliverance or healing. It is a message of "*compassion*".)

Matthew 9:1, in a sense, concludes the account, "And Jesus entered into the ship, and passed over the Lake, and returned home ... " The crowds were there at the shore to greet Him and inevitably someone would be healed before He reached His front door (Mark 5:21). The contrast is remarkable. On the East side of the Lake, He is asked to leave. On the West side, they were waiting for Him to dock. But hearts cannot be judged by one miracle, He would make the return trip with opposite results.

Gallilee

Jesus is on His way home, but not without interruption. The remainder of Luke's eighth chapter (verse 40 on) records an urgent request from Jairus, one of the Administrators of a local synagogue for Jesus to come "post haste" and heal his dying daughter.

A woman who had been hemorrhaging, a condition steadily growing worse and worse over a period of twelve years, sought her way through the crowd persuaded in here own heart that the mere touch of His hem would bring her healing. She was wrong about the hem, but she was right about Jesus. Henry Alford was impressed by this simple fact. He wrote:

"There was doubtless a weakness and error in this woman's view. She imagined that healing power flowed as it were magically out of the Lord's person; and she touched the fringe of His garment as the most sacred, as well as the most accessible part. But she obtained what she desired. She sought it, though in error, yet in faith. And she obtained it, because this faith was known and recognized by the Lord. It is most true ... that there did go forth healing virtue (power) from Him. The error of her view was overborne ... by the strength of her faith. And this is a most encouraging miracle for us to recollect, when we are disposed to think despondingly of the ignorance ... of much of the Christian world; that He who accepted this woman for her faith even in error and weakness, may also accept them (us)."

She knew immediately that she was healed. She needed no medical confirmation. The conviction flashed through her mind, "I have received a permanent cure!" [The language of Mark (5:29) witnesses her keen excitement.] She would have slipped away unnoticed too, except it was not the Savior's practice to permit that. It was her faith not her theology that made her whole. It is one of many lessons

that is not necessarily taught by experience alone. The gentle word of the Great Teacher must make the truth clear.

While Jesus was speaking --perhaps expounding on the value of an active faith, a message was sent from the bedside of Jairus' daughter that she had died and there was no longer any reason to "trouble" the Teacher. But Jesus continued on His way to the home of Jairus as if not to hear the message. (Such is the emphasis of Mark 5:36 "*Jesus overhearing what was spoken ...*" NAS).

In the crises of life, we will find ourselves either frightened of the darkness or able to trust Jesus to lead us into the sunlight. "*Fear not,*" Jesus spoke encouragingly to Jairus, "*only believe.*" Never let the appearance of things decide whether or not you will trust Him. Faith is in fact the evidence of things NOT seen.

Whereupon, Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John into Jairus' home where the child lay. Clearing the room of everyone excepting the parents and His three disciples, with tender address in the Hebrew tongue He brought their twelve year old daughter back to life.

It goes almost without saying that a miracle of this magnitude must not be proclaimed too loudly. Care must be taken not to excite the crowds that, as it was, pressed upon Him. Peter, James and John alone of the twelve were permitted on a couple of occasions, as here, to follow Jesus into places that were for others off limits. They alone had opportunity to witness details of our Lord's ministry that would otherwise be excluded from the record. But why only these three? In one sense, the answer is most obvious. These three needed something they would obtain from such encounters. As individuals, there was always that special need each disciple had and that particular reason for treating them either singularly or in smaller groups.

Perhaps we should not let the record imply that the other nine were never so favored by the Lord. We need only recall that Peter and John were two of the three disciples that later wrote part of the Scripture to see the importance of their being present as eyewitnesses of "His Glory" (2 Peter 1:16; I John 1:1). In the case of James, we are left with a mystery as to why Jesus must continually be drawing him to His side. The answer may be found not so much in the record of his life as of his death (Acts 12:2). James was the first apostle and only the second believer to accept martyrdom for Christ. Undoubtedly, Jesus knew this all along.

Returning to His ministry, Jesus followed a course through a number of Galilean villages teaching as He went. His journey brought Him once again through Nazareth. Once again, His rejection by His own was re-affirmed. Months of miracles could not change their hearts (Mark 6:1-6). It did not matter. The time had come anyway to turn over His ministry --at least in part --to His disciples. They had been months in training --some of them --and besides, the Lord of the Harvest needed laborers. The third tour would in effect be theirs to make. It would be theirs to begin knowing what Paul later referred to as "the fellowship of His sufferings."

Then He called His twelve disciples together, Luke related (Luke 9:1), giving them authority over devils and diseases, He commissioned them to go through Galilee preaching the Good news of the coming Kingdom and healing the sick. Mark noted (Mark 6:13) that they brought along the anointing oil --a practice that never lost its significance to the early church (James 5:14).

Jerusalem

If our present interest was in following the disciples, our task would be a relatively easy one. We are interested in Jesus, though, and He has disappeared. The first nine verses of Luke nine or the corresponding record in Mark (6:7 through 29) say all there is to say about the third tour of Galilee, and the absence of any reference to the Savior is all too evident. Only Matthew, in his account of the closing days of the second tour of Galilee (Matthew 9:18-38)--after recalling the healings of two blind men and one other who by reason of a demon could not speak--made a very general remark regarding the Savior in verse 35 (Matthew 9:35). It is possible, though, knowing Matthew's tendency to group events together based on how these events were associated in his memory, that verse 35 is a reference to Jesus' activity in general in Galilee. It seems most likely the case, since, as Mark already pointed out (Mark 6:5), Jesus was healing less and less these days. The only other reference in Matthew that can help us locate the Savior's whereabouts is Matthew 11: 1.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples (after He sent them forth by twos), He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities."

Whose cities? Where is the Savior?

Some believe He was in Galilee. Others, as myself, believe that He made His way alone to Jerusalem to the pool of Bethesda (John 5). It is not difficult to suppose this. As regards the time of year, John wrote (John 5:1), "*there was a feast of the Jews ...* " It is highly unlikely that this feast was "*The*" Feast or Passover, since in that case John --

little doubt --would have so identified it as he had done elsewhere (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55, etc.).

John also identified the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2), making it highly improbable that the feast in John 5:1 was a Feast of Tabernacles. Against the idea that John 5:1 referred to the Feast of Pentecost is the simple fact that Pentecost occurs in June leaving ten months between this chapter and chapter six which is clearly a record of the events at Passover (April) of the following year. Between chapters five and six, then, there would be ten months of complete silence -- a most unlikely possibility.

The Feast of Purim, a feast celebrating the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's plot, a feast instituted by Queen Esther (Esther 9:26, 27) in the month of March, just one month before Passover, could reasonably be referred to here by the Apostle John as "a feast." It was during this month, then, (March) that the disciples in six groups of two labored in Galilee for the Master, while He made his solitary way to Jerusalem. He would rejoin them for the Passover. With or without His disciples, Jesus was taking "time out" to go to Jerusalem (John 5:1).

Perhaps, it was simply the impulse of His heart as a Jewish Pilgrim to be at Jerusalem during the feast days. At Passover this year, He would be scheduled in the counsel of God to be elsewhere back with His disciples; so, He must leave Jerusalem soon and not rupture prematurely the building hatred of His enemies. In lieu of this, He may have visited Jerusalem for the earlier feast (Purim in March). Persecution or no, His heart was still with His people.

It was this brief visit that marked the beginning of His last year of conflict with the "Chosen people." Before He would return to Galilee. The die would be cast. He would have offended the religious leaders one time too many.

Upon Him they would have in turn passed the sentence of death. Here, at the Pool of Bethesda, another "Sabbath day healing" provided the occasion for the confrontation. It was at this time that the religious leaders decided unreservedly that Jesus must die. Led to the city by God, and by His redeemer's heart, and, in a sense, obligated by the course of His ministry and life, He was truly Isaiah's "Lamb brought to slaughter."

The dialogue between Jesus and the cripple, recorded in John 5, is itself remarkable in many details but it is not the center of the chapter. Jesus' three point sermon, precipitated--as it were--by this incident, is the main interest. Like the sharpened double edge sword God's Word always is, His words cut to the heart of the matter. The language of H. R. Reynolds summarizes the situation for us;

"Christ's view of the Sabbath lay, indeed, in the heart of the old Law, and was even recognized by some of the wisest and noblest spirits of Judaism; but it ran counter to the current traditional interpretation, and cut as with a sharp saber through the knots and entanglement of the schools. It was the unpardonable sin that ideas and rules which sustained and fed the authority of the hierarchical party should be swept away as valueless and perilous accumulations, and as fungoid encrustations upon the Law of Moses ... the authorities are in arms against Him."

Jesus' Sabbath day healings had been a constant irritation to the Pharisees for a number of months. But what Jesus could "get away with" on the fringe of their personal empire in Northern Galilee was a definite threat to their authority here in Jerusalem at the center of things. Being aware of this fact as well as the potential of the "carnal" enthusiasm of the crowds to create undesired situations, our Lord temporarily withdrew from the scene (John 5:12). The following day -- or the day after -- He re-appeared in the Temple to identify Himself and call an assembly for His

address to His adversaries (John 5:14).

It is important here to interject a comment from F. L. Godet on the character of Jesus as regards His alleged disobedience to the Law. (Not even the Sanhedrin could substantiate their case against Him on these grounds.) "Born a Jew," Godet wrote,

"He (Jesus) lived as a faithful Jew. He emancipated Himself, undoubtedly, from the yoke of human commandments and Pharisaic traditions, but never from that of the Law itself. It is impossible to prove in the life of Jesus a single contravention of a truly legal prescription. Death alone freed Him from this yoke. Such is the impression which He left, that St. Paul says of Him (Galatians 4:4): 'born under the law,' and characterizes His whole life by the expression (Romans 15: 8): 'minister of the circumcision.'"

(Often we, as christians, risk misinterpreting the Savior's words when we see them through the eyes of Grace and not the Torah or Law. His analogies and parables were designed for their ears. Gehenna as a description of eternal judgment illustrates this, having been unreferenced in all of Paul's writings to the Gentile churches. Yet eternal punishment is nonetheless very real.)

Regardless, the religious leadership persecuted Him (John 5:16) because He was continually healing on the Sabbath day. His practice of "violating" the Sabbath --to use the Pharisees' argument -- had become the rule. It was in this context that Jesus' discourse followed --not as a defense of His doctrine or position, but--as the naked revelation of the Pharisaic heart. In an unprecedented way, Jesus seemed to be on the offense. Beginning with an explanation for His actions at the pool, He led into, what could appear as, a verbal attack against contemporary theology, revealing in Pharisaism the total absence of the true spirit of the Mosaic Law (John 5: 41-47). His vindication, to begin with, was simple, He was subordinate to the Father (John 5:16-30). In accusing Him, they were

accusing the Father.

"I have done nothing," Jesus affirmed, "but obey the signal which God gave Me at the moment."

"And I will do nothing," Jesus avowed (John 5:19), "unless My Father so directs Me!

Furthermore, if this simple act is an infraction of their rules and an offense to them, how will they react to the many other things The Father will ask of Him!!"

"My Father and He are intimately close (John 5:20 "*The Father loves the Son.*") and there are acts of mercy later that He will direct Jesus to do that will utterly confuse your theological intelligence." (This is only the beginning!!!) The religious leaders were upset. It was far from the Savior's intentions to instigate trouble, but it was clearly evident to Him in the light of prophecy and circumstances that such trouble was unavoidable.

"The Father has so testified of Me," Jesus added His second point (John 5:31-40).

What can any religious leader say when he is met with such an acclamation of Faith. The position of the Pharisee is utterly indefensible. "God said" are the two words that no one can refute. In addition, whenever one's convictions require him to accept such a declaration; for, he knows in his heart it is true; God *HAS* spoken. The only course of action left to a pharisaic mindset is uncontrollable rage. Destroying Sabbath principles was one thing, but calling God His Father -- as if to imply Himself of Divine origin--well--that was, according to Jesus' Rabbinic Colleagues: **BLASPHEMY!!!**

With the crowds, no doubt, anticipating with anxious excitement the Great Teacher's next remark, He passed from "*defense to attack.*" says Godet, "*and unveils to the Jews the moral cause of their unbelief, the absence of the true spirit of the Law*" (John 5:41-47). By what authority

could He so blatantly speak and by what power could He ultimately back up His claims!!! To be sure, they wanted to know.

Jesus' discourse on the final Judgment (John 5:22-24, 27) and the Resurrection of the dead (John 5:25 - 29) served only to alert them to the fact that the authority and power by which He healed a lame man was only a small part of a far greater source than they could imagine. His authority extends to the Eternal judgment Hall where He alone will be found worthy to open the records from which many of His listeners will be condemned. His power will someday course through countless residents of the grave not only bringing them back to life but resurrecting them in the newness of immortality!!

Jesus concluded by uncovering the harsh reality no person being both carnal and of strong religious convictions would care to face. Perhaps it was the message of "tough love" exemplified today in the sermon of those servants of God that care enough about the people of God to speak the truth:

"You do not love God. If you stand accused before God for not seeking His Divine Will, it was Moses --not I --who affirmed it. You do not believe the Word of God. You do not even know what it says!!" (John 5:42-47)

With this, Jesus returned to Galilee. He was no doubt interested in how His disciples were making out. Besides, the Passover was drawing near and it was important, as already stated, for a number of reasons to spend it with them (John 6:1-4).

Bethsaida Julius

"And the apostles, when they were returned, told Him all that they had done. And He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida" (Luke 9:10).

Bethsaida Julius was situated Northeast of Galilee in Gaulonitis. What is about to follow, "*The Feeding of the Five Thousand*", was, as regards our Lord's ministry, an unexpected change. (Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10- 17; John 6:1-13). It is most unusual to find Jesus anywhere but in Jerusalem for the Passover, but this year (John 6:1-4) He had no intentions of attending. John the Baptist was dead, martyred for His witness (indeed, the word martyr means witness). Herod: Antipas, who had ordered John's death, had also shown an increased interest in Jesus' activities (Matthew 14:1). Matthew comments (Matthew 14:13) "*when Jesus heard of it, He departed*" (into the desert place we find Him now).

There is no clear indication in the account that John had just died, rather, that JESUS HAD JUST BEEN INFORMED. No doubt, it took time for the news of His forerunner's death to reach Him. Nonetheless, our Lord's retirement to this desert place seems to be the immediate consequence of His hearing of it. Besides, the disciples needed rest (Mark 6:31). Ministering to the needs of people was exhausting work. And there was the more immediate need to teach His disciples the true nature of His Messiahship and the fact of His approaching death. Some things were basically unchanged. The populace was-as always-excited over healings (John 6:2). The pharisees continued their campaign to gather support in an effort to

silence the Master. [The prevalent national attitude regarding Jesus was somewhere between indifferent to hostile. Judean hatred was in point of fact the reason why Jesus had to avoid Jerusalem (John 7:1).]

These details, then, provide the occasion:

- Aware of the growing national opposition to His teachings,
- The suspicions of Herod over what rumor interpreted as Jesus' growing popularity,
- Conscious of the need of the disciples for rest and private study, and
- Saddened by the death of John - for, human grief was not beyond the Savior,

Jesus withdrew.

"And the people saw ...," Mark wrote (Mark 6:33).

They observed Him get into a ship (Matthew 14: 1-3) and proceed across the Lake. Determined to follow Him, for whatever reasons (John 6:2) they ran around the Lake to greet Him whenever He disembarked. It is at this point that we become concerned with the disciples. They had withdrawn for rest. They were hungry. They had already fulfilled their commission toward these people. They need but a moment to themselves. Beside (Mark 6:36), the people are not far from home and they are not poor. They can go into the villages nearby and buy food for themselves: "*Send them away!*" (Mark 6:36).

"*But Jesus was moved with compassion toward them ...*" (Mark 6: 34), NOT because they were physically in need of food -- this point must be correctly observed. He had compassion toward them "because," Mark wrote, "*they were as sheep not having a shepherd*" (Mark 6:34). That was a Spiritual issue. (Yet that may not have been

immediately clear to His disciples.)

Somewhere in the course of things, perhaps while Jesus was healing the sick who were present (Luke 9:11), He asked Philip, "*Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?*" (John 6:5). It was not uncommon for Jesus to expand a disciple's vision or draw that disciple's attention inward to measure the strength of his own faith by the use of key questions. It was merely Philip's turn to be tested and looking logically at the dilemma, he had no immediate solution. Andrew, thinking that "*little is better than nothing,*" brought to Jesus the small lunch he was able to obtain from a lad in the crowd (John 6:8,9). Even our little, Philip, is sufficient in the hands of God; for, " ... *He Himself knew what He would do,*" John recalled.

The hour was getting late (Matthew 14:15), that is to say, it was sometime after three in the afternoon. Many thoughts must have occupied our Savior at the moment:

- There were the Paschal lambs being sacrificed in the Temple Court in Jerusalem;
- There was John the Baptist who now symbolized as the Lord's martyred prophet Jesus' own death soon at hand;
- There was the multitude who because of their indifference to the Truth were like sheep who, in their "spiritually" weakened state, had become easy prey for the "pharisaic" wolves and they had no Shepherd over them.

F. L. Godet continues the explanation,

"The mention of the feast near at hand (John 6:4) must ... serve to explain the conduct of Jesus Not being able to go to Jerusalem for the Feast, Jesus, on seeing the multitudes ... recognizes in this unexpected circumstance a signal from the Father. He puts this concourse in comparison with the Feast which is about to be celebrated in Jerusalem, and says to

Himself, for His disciples and for the multitude: 'We also will have our Passover!' This is the thought which sets in its true light the following miracle, as the discourses which are connected with it (John 6) prove.

Jesus, thereupon, instructed His disciples to arrange His guests in groups of fifties and one hundreds (Mark 6:39-40). The word used by Mark literally means "*garden beds*." The brightly colored dress of the attendees, the various shades of reds and blues interspersed with whatever other tints were represented must have suggested to Peter the appearance of rows of flowers decorating the grassy hillside. John recalled that the men were seated separate from the women (John 6:10). Even the count of five thousand excluded the women and children, but there is nothing unnatural about such details. Women and children in the East always kept themselves at a respectful distance from the head of the family and his guests.

"*Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes,*" Luke wrote, "*and looking up to heaven, He blessed them ...*" (Luke 9:16). Although John, who alone, recalled Jesus' returning thanks for the bread as a sincere expression of heart-felt gratitude for God's provision, Luke clearly shows that the incident took on another meaning as well. In a more formal sense, Jesus blessed the bread, as if to include it as part of a religious observance. One is instantly reminded of Paul's words to the Corinthians, "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*" (I Corinthians 10:16). It is easy to see that through this symbolism He was transporting His audience one year ahead to the Passover at which His own body would become the broken bread. He would then be "*Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us!*" (I Corinthians 5: 7).

"*Then when they were filled, He instructed His disciples, 'Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.'*" (John 6:12). And they gathered

twelve traveling baskets full.

What is the significance of these words?

The disciples handled the distribution of the bread (Mark 6:41)--perhaps, as one brother suggested, "*that they might grasp it in their hands, who in their unbelief had seen it to be too little.*" Now, they will gather up the remainder, a basket apiece, suggesting, again, that Christ is the bread of life given to His people in the desert place of this world. In a spiritual sense "*nothing is lost.*" The bread of life was not broken in vain.

Then it happened...!

Quickly, Jesus ushered His disciples back into the boat, instructing them to follow the coast westward (Mark 6:45), to the other side of Bethsaida. He had plans to join them later. Meanwhile, the whole atmosphere upon the hillside was changing. Like the wind changing direction and turning into a gale (which it would soon do) the crowd was ready to move on cue by whomever would take the initiative to take Jesus forcibly and crown Him as their king (John 6:14, 15). Jesus was in a state of alarm. He must move quickly and smoothly as one diffusing a bomb about ready to explode! Mark (6:46) related, "*When He had sent them away* " The words used are polite but abrupt. He bid farewell to His "friends." In a courteous way, He dismissed them while being careful not to reveal His anxiety or the fact that He was conscious of their intentions. Perhaps, even while they were dispersing and wondering why the suddenness of this goodbye, and no doubt themselves conscious of again another change in the atmosphere, Jesus slipped away up the hillside and out of sight. It all happened so fast, their plans were frustrated. Nonetheless, they were left with a very positive impression that was indeed more than the warm feeling of gratitude,

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"This is the Prophet Moses spoke of!" (John 6:14). Somehow the veil had slipped a bit and they had a premonition that He might be their true king." They were right but the timing was wrong. They would make it a point to see Him another day.

Jesus, meanwhile, was somewhere in the Mountain nearby, alone, praying ...(Mark 6:46).

On The Sea

The crisis--for the moment--was over. No malice on the part of the religious leaders in Judea could have been as fatal as this attempt of the Galileans to give a "political turn" to Jesus' mission. Galilee would be--at best--a difficult place now to minister in. Perhaps, His usefulness in that region was temporarily blocked. The combination of

- Herod's suspicions,
- The Scribes' hatred, and
- The unreasoning enthusiasm of the people gave ample proof of this.

The sun had set and the Paschal moon revealed that the boat, in which the twelve made their hasty exit, was now struggling with the waves and well out to sea (Mark 6:48). Almost as if God had intended to hold them there--for it was the safest place from the crowds--they found themselves, still at three o'clock in the morning (the fourth watch) three miles from shore (John 6:19). If this was to be a lesson in faith--and it cannot be doubted--its applications later on would be almost limitless. There would be many winds blowing contrary to their service for God. If they attempted to confront this opposition in their own strength, they would quickly find themselves adrift in the middle of a sea of problems. It seems an ironic twist to things: They put forth great effort to place themselves in the middle of that sea, yet with a little faith in the Master and absolutely no effort ("*They willingly received Him*"-- John 6:21), they were at the shore.

Jesus had just been in prayer. Therefore-- no wonder-- the waves that tormented them, He walked upon! The moon must have revealed the silhouette of the Master now clearly visible high atop a swell of water, now out of view lowered into a valley of waves, but drawing ever closer. "*He would have passed by them,*" Mark noted (Mark 6:48) -- perhaps as part of the test- but he paused long enough to let them know that it was He.

"*Courage!*" Jesus spoke out over the noise of wind and wave. "*It is I. Chase away your anxiety and fear.*"

He was probably beyond them when Peter cried out, "*If it is really you, Lord, bid me come!*" (Matthew 14: 28).

"*Come, Peter,*" Jesus quickly responded, and Peter stepped unto the Lake (Matthew 14: 29).

It was not the waves that unnerved the apostle. It was the wind. One strong gust (Matthew 14:30) frightened him, and he began to sink. Again, it was not what He was doing that in a moment of carnal reasoning suddenly seemed unbelievable. No! It was the wind! It was the voice of opposition that attempted to "*throw him off his feet.*" Fear then brought sinking. When Jesus finally entered the boat, Mark said that He stepped *UP* into it (Mark 6:51). The waves were still billowing. John's recollection was that He did not enter the boat until they were near the land (John 6:21), suggesting that the Master walked the entire width of the sea (seven miles across)!

But when the sun rose the following morning and the sea was once again calm, any spectators along the shore south of Bethsaida in Galilee where they came to dock, would see nothing unusual in thirteen men disembarking. As concerns the twelve, they were too astonished for words (Mark 6:51). As of yet, they were insensitive to the explanation for these things (Mark 6:52). Their faith was

"*little*" (Matthew 14:31). Someday, however, Jesus' activities will not only make theological sense, but to paraphrase Martin Luther--"*they would die a thousand deaths for its sake.*"

No matter how strong one's faith, though, the work of God within the soul will never be anything less than unusual. Upon His return to Galilee, Jesus did something that could easily be called unexpected. He decided to go from village to village, seemingly with no particular purpose in mind other than for the walk. He appeared to be going no place in particular. According to Matthew (14:36) and Mark (6:56), Jesus, in effect, publicized His return, making Himself available to the sick who would touch Him for their healing. Some of the "five thousand" remained on the east shore until morning, assuming Jesus and His disciples would return (John 6:22-- 24). When He did not, they boarded boats from Tiberias, which little doubt docked there during the storm, and crossed over the sea to find Him. In the course of time, they were successful in relocating Him (John 6:25). He, however, permitted Himself to be found. Mark 6:56.) This appears the only explanation for Mark 6:56. The sick were pressing in to touch Him as He went. Yet, He personally laid His hands on no one (at least the record does not so indicate). Neither are we to assume that the one message--that of the coming Kingdom of God--which had preoccupied Him in previous months, was at this time being proclaimed. This was no tour of Galilee. Which cities, villages, and towns He might have visited, we can only surmise. Since the record in so many details is either different or incomplete, the question can rightfully be asked: What *WAS* Jesus doing?

The answer is partly to be found in Mark (7:1),

"And the Pharisees and some of the Scribes gathered together around Him when they had come from Jerusalem. " (NAS)

It was this delegation that led the discussion with Jesus that is recorded in John's Gospel (John 6:26-65). The entire conversation sounds very similar to that in the fifth chapter of John. There are two major differences: First, this time it is happening in Galilee, and secondly, His disciples are present. As this issue came "to a head" earlier in Judea, the same was happening now in Galilee for the same reason: Confrontation with Israel regarding the Lord's mission was just as inevitable in the northern provinces as in Jerusalem.

A crowd, however, that just days before had claimed allegiance to Him and sought forcibly to crown Him their King could not understand the Savior's real motivation. Before His walk would be ended, The Savior, through His response to their inquiry, would have insulted their intentions and offended their beliefs. Consequently they would forsake Him (John 6:66). Only the twelve and a handful of women would remain whom Jesus referred to directly in saying "*all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me*" (John 6:37).

Gallilee

This conversation recorded by John as having taken place in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59), nonetheless, would have as easily represented a more continuing dialogue between the Savior and His countrymen. Parts of the story have been shared with us by Matthew (Matthew 15:1-9) and Mark (Mark 7:1-13) but were not recorded in John's recollections. Consider this incident, for example, (Mark 7:1-13) in which Jesus' disciples were once again eating with unwashed hands. The entire account merely illustrates the more general observation, that Jesus nor His disciples faithfully kept the "*traditions of the elders*" (Mark 7:3) which we must remember every Pharisee and disciple of the Pharisees sought to keep inviolate.

"Such Traditions," Jesus exclaimed, "are in direct conflict with the Word of God. Through following them, Truth has become meaningless to you!" (Mark 7:13)

It is in this context of growing controversy that Jesus unraveling the scroll of Isaiah again (John 6:45), this time in the synagogue in Capernaum, endeavors to unravel the Scroll of His ministry as well. Jesus, the Teacher, stands before them, not as one who plans to address them with harsh reprimands, but as one who desires to reveal the mystery of His life to them; for, it is the acceptance of that revelation alone that means salvation and eternal life.

"You follow Me about in search of provision for your bodies rather than your souls," He began, "you have walked so far to find Me, labor not for the meat that perishes (John 6:26). It is spiritual provision I offer you, eternal life and I alone give it!" (John 6:27)

"How can we receive it! What do you require of us in

return?" they asked. We must believe that it was an honest inquiry, but they were not prepared for the answer. They expected to hear about requirements, methods and procedures, about duties, services and pilgrimages; for, their minds were receptive to the idea of working for the blessings of God.

"This is the work you must do," Jesus explained, "simply believe on Me."

He did not call for a moment of faith but a life of faith, a surrendering of themselves to the Grace of God. Though they did not comprehend the depth of such a call, they sensed that it was involved and for them would require some guarantee that Jesus, in fact, could be trusted to give them that eternal life He spoke of.

"Give us a sign--a display of your authority and power--whereby we might comfortably believe you," they asked. For them this was a most reasonable request (John 6:30). *"The manna in the wilderness was a continuing sign of God's Faithfulness under Moses' leadership. Can you do as great!"* (John 6:32)

A comparison with Moses was intended to show that Moses' ministry was far more trustworthy, far more dynamic, than that of Jesus. Moses gave forty years worth of bread. Jesus gave only one meal. Their interpretation of things, obvious to us, was not accurate. First, Moses gave no one bread. Secondly, the bread they received in the wilderness may have been bread from heaven, but it was not the bread of heaven. These errors needed correcting if the Words of Christ were to have any meaning at all (John 6:32,33).

"Lord, give us this bread!" someone in the crowd called out and others soon joined in (John 6:34).

It is most difficult to observe the heart that speaks these

words here. They still have a carnal interest in receiving everlasting life without the necessity of believing in Christ. Although this may have been a sincere request on their part--little doubt--they only intended, as James spoke on another occasion (James 4:3) "*to consume it upon (their) own lusts.*"

"I am the Bread of Life!!" Jesus spoke plainly.

The feelings that directed this conversation may be hard to trace as it goes along. Two things here are fairly clear, however, as regards the Lord's response. First, it is His death and resurrection that will ultimately provide everlasting life for those who believe on Him and secondly, the Grace of God never compromises with carnal interests. Short of a life of commitment to Christ, and without unreserved trust in Him, this Bread of Life would be unavailable.

"If you want the Bread, you want ME!!" was the clear reply.

At this point the Lord's gaze seemed to be fixed more on His few faithful disciples than the crowd. He seemed to abruptly launch out in another direction in the course of speaking:

"... him that cometh to Me," Jesus began to make His point, "I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

[Not given to footnotes, I must still comment here on the great controversy within Christendom: that between works and faith or free will and grace. Anyone wanting eternal life must come to Christ, but only if the Father draws them. (John 6:44)

Archdeacon Watkins commenting on this remark wrote, "*Men have now seized one and now the other of these truths, and have built upon them in separation logical systems of doctrine which are but half-truths. He (Jesus) states them in union. Their reconciliation transcends*

human reason, but is within the experience of human life."]

The Jews murmured (John 6:41). These were citizens of Capernaum and Bethsaida! These were Galileans who had watched Him day after day work the works of God. Oh! How quickly the national disease of unbelief spread! Yet, perhaps such a turn was understandable in the light of Jesus' remark about "*coming down from heaven.*" (John 6:38) This was Joseph and Mary's boy!! (John 6:42) No one knew of any other detail governing the Savior's entrance into the world. There had never been talk of His "Miraculous" birth. Mary "pondered these things silently in her heart and Joseph was deceased. In every respect He was--to their eyes--human. Yes, He had the spirit and gift of the ancient prophets, but nothing beyond that seemed to identify Him as special or extra-ordinary in any sense--at least as far as they were now concerned.

"*Murmur not,*" Jesus repeated with emphatic assurance, "*I AM the Bread of Life!*" (John 6:48) "*The manna in the wilderness,*" Jesus explained, "*though miraculous still did not cause anyone to live forever! I can!! And I will do it through my death!*" He suddenly concluded (John 6:51).

"*They strove among themselves,*" John recalled. This last statement seemed to call to them for an interpretation. Did He say we are to eat His flesh???? He could not possibly have meant such a thing!! H. R. Reynolds summed up the moment:

"The Jews had not yet come to an unanimous opinion that this wonderful Being was talking sheer heresy or incomprehensible mystery. They knew His habit of (talking in parables). Some denounced Him as uttering an intolerable riddle. Some saw, in a measure, through it and hated the doctrine that was thereby conveyed ... How could He be so essential to the Life of the world? and How, said the pure materialist, how can He give us His flesh to eat?"

Yes, it was a parable--more accurately--a metaphor speaking of His crucifixion. His death would mean nothing to them, unless, through their faith in Him, they were to understand the significance of it and gratefully, willingly, let the Grace of God, so evident in His atoning death, work also in them.

"Yes, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man ... Whoso eats My flesh (yes, and) drinks My blood (also), for Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in him (and whoever eats My flesh, shall live forever. THIS is Heaven sent bread!!! Not manna!!! (Yes,) whoever eats of it (Me) lives forever!!!" Jesus spoke with repeated emphasis.

No less than five times Jesus repeated Himself, that memorable day in the Synagogue at Capernaum. The service was ended. They filed out of the Synagogue and out of His life (John 6:66). It is important to recall the ending of this part of the story. Jesus turned to the little group who remained at His side, and knowing already that they were God-given and had no intentions of leaving Him, nonetheless, expressed an interest in their response.

"Will you also go away?" He asked.

Peter's quick reply is all the Savior ever needs to hear. Then, too, the disciples who remained with Him needed to remind themselves of the reason they had decided to follow Him. It was not for the physical provision, nor the pleasure or comfort of the moment. It was not for the glory of it nor any fame:

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. (John 6:68,69)

With the few believing in Him and the many rejecting Him, Jesus was ready to resume His Journey. I find it easy to believe that for this reason He came to the synagogue in Capernaum. It was one more incident designed to draw His "few" closer while the rest of the world joined hands

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against Him. In this context, the next verse in the story makes clear sense: (Mark 7 :24) "*And ... He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and would have no man know it ...*"

Lebanon (Tyre)

Leaving Galilee altogether, Jesus went into Lebanon. This marked the second withdrawal from His home province in--what the record seems to conclude--was as many weeks. (The first departure to Bethsaida Julius with the feeding of the five thousand and its result dictated this move.) He was at least forty miles from home--but His heart was still back there (Matthew 15:24)--when a woman of Canaanite extraction, and probably speaking Greek, found Him (Mark 7:26).

The reluctance of Jesus to meet with her is all too evident. While she followed behind crying, "*Lord, help me! Lord, help me!*" the disciples counseled Him to "*send her away!*" (Matthew 15:23) She was no stranger to His ministry. She addressed Him as the "Son of David" and spoke with such confidence in His ability to deliver (Matthew 15:22) that we have to be genuinely impressed with how far His fame reached. But, Jesus did not want to accommodate her or, at least, so it appeared. He had been sent to heal Israel (Matthew 15:24). They were the sheep--now quite lost---without the Shepherd. He had no commission toward any other nation. In point of fact, it just didn't seem right or fair to minister unto the rest of the world as long as Israel was in need (Mark 7:27).

"It is not right to give the children's bread to the dogs!" He remarked (Mark 7:27).

This statement did not lower her. It elevated Israel! The Savior would die for the entire world including this woman (I John 2:2)--but Israel first!! Paul agreed, "*... the Gospel of Christ ... it is the power of God unto Salvation to every-one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the*

Greek." (Romans 1:16) His point made, He delivered the woman's daughter as the account shows and as we had anticipated He would. But the Savior's grief over Israel remained intense.

[Jeremiah once found himself with a message to preach but would not (Jeremiah 20:9). Jesus in contrast--for want of an audience--found Himself with a message to preach but could not.] The Father was aware of the Savior's heart. In terms of His commission and His ministry to Israel, Jesus' wanderings through Gentile lands may have appeared unscheduled but there was at least one more stop. Before returning to Galilee, the Father would lead Him to the 10 cities in Israel which were culturally Hellenic, The Decapolis (Mark 7:31), where He would be provided with that audience. Even here, though the initial greeting from the crowd was not, "Lord, teach us," rather, "Lord, heal us." (Mark 7:32,33)

Decapolis

Jesus sighed (Mark 7:34). His grief was without words. Here, as in Galilee (Mark 8:12), glimpses are given of the great difficulty under which the Lord labored and how this--to quote H. B. Swete--(had) "*borne in upon the Lord's human spirit in an especial manner.*" Swete then referred to Romans 8:23:

"... but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption ..."

This was the area of the world where He had encountered the man with the legion of demons. This man--no doubt--had been busy these past few months sharing his testimony and preparing the way for the Savior's return. The account of Jesus' reception here speaks clearly when contrasted with earlier events in Galilee. We cannot be sure how much time has gone by since He left there. He may have been gone for weeks traveling slowly through Lebanon, up to Sidon and then--as some suppose--north and east to Mt. Hermon. Then, following the mountain paths to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He made His way---being in no particular hurry--to the "coasts of Decapolis." This region, itself, took in a large area extending along the east coast of the Sea. But at last, His popularity revealed His whereabouts to a crowd of lame, blind, deaf, "and many others" Matthew added (Matthew 15:29), and all was set for what we have come to call the "feeding of the four thousand." (Mark 8:1 - 10; Matthew 15:32 - 39)

Decapolis, too, was Gentile--at least "culturally" speaking, but, let the record show that--in what the

disciples called "the wilderness" (Mark 8:4)---Jesus found what He had been looking for--hungry hearts. A contrast with the feeding of the five thousand serves to show this:

- The five thousand were disinterested in His teaching; they were coming and going, seeking only a physical healing (John 6:26, 31). These people, by contrast, stayed *three* days with Him (Mark 8:2) showing (as Mark's choice of words indicates) an interest in Jesus in a more personal and committed way.
- The five thousand could have returned home to dine (Mark 6:36), but these people were too far from home and would have collapsed from exhaustion had Jesus dismissed them (Mark 8:3,4). They brought themselves into a most unwelcome situation--only because they wanted to be with Him.
- Jesus had compassion on the five thousand as lost sheep (Mark 6:34), but here before Him were over four thousand followers that needed to be physically refreshed with a good meal (Mark 8:2).
- Lest this would seem to indicate a superficial expression of His concern toward them, consider also that here He Himself addressed the company to sit for their Divinely prepared meal, while with the five thousand, the twelve were instructed to seat them. (compare: Mark 6:39 with Mark 8:6) Here, the Savior, as an expression of that closeness which He must have felt at the moment, needed no one to represent Him. The sum of the matter can be found in Matthew's and Mark's choice of words (they alone recorded the incident) as Jesus prayed before distributing the bread.
- He did not "bless" it as He had with the five

thousand (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16) but in a far warmer way expressing His gratitude to God for what had been happening over these past three days, He "gave thanks" (Mark 7:6; Matthew 15:36).

We can easily grasp the symbolism, then, of the seven baskets (and they were large baskets capable of holding a man) full of left over bread.

[Recall, in the case of the five thousand, there were twelve smaller baskets collected. Twelve speaks of the Tribes and, therefore, the Nation of Israel, for they were Galileans--representing Israel--that fed that day on five loafs and two fish.]

This occasion, quite different already in so many ways, spoke of a more perfect and fulfilling experience for the Lord. (Seven is the number of Perfection.) Seven *LARGE* baskets full might speak of the Father's abundant delight in what had happened. The five thousand sought physical bread and needed to be asked to eat the spiritual--which they refused. The four thousand sought spiritual bread and needed to be detained to eat the physical.

This account is telling us something. As difficult as it may be to believe, the tide of Jesus' ministry in Galilee had ebbed. With it had washed away from the hearts of His own people the certainty of His right to the Throne of David. The impressions of the previous year, though dug deeply into the soft sands of their minds, could not sustain the erosion of other ideas and interests. Given time, they would forget the touch of His gentle hand. Is this not the nature of persons who are motivated by personal interests rather than commitment? They are like the sand that holds no water and in which no seed can grow. Decapolis on the other

hand--and for that matter Perea, just to the south, proved to be virgin soil ready for the seed of God's Word.

Jesus would be back.

Magadan (Magdala)

After dismissing the crowd, the Lord left the neighborhood by boat. His destination was Dalmanutha or Magadan--as it was also called (Mark 8:10; Matthew

5:39)--in Galilee (for it is believed by many that the community in question is none other than Magdala on the south western shore of the Lake). If Jesus' departure from Galilee some weeks earlier was unexpected, this return "home" had to be somewhat of a surprise. For the first time in Galilee--according to the record--our Savior is approached by a small group of Sadducees. They have either come down from Tiberias or up from Jerusalem. Whichever, this was no casual meeting but a scheduled confrontation both on the part of the Sadducees and--we must accept--on the part of God. It is important to recall what the Sadducees represented. They were--with whatever respect is due them, nonetheless--doctrinally dull. They neither believed that God intervenes in History nor, for that matter, that He even cares about man as individuals in particular. Similarly, good and evil, adversity and prosperity, have their origin solely in the free will of man. Thus, in their view, there is no such thing as suffering, and so, there can be no atonement. Prepared theologically to deny Jesus' coming (as the Son of God) and His reason for coming (to redeem His people through crucifixion and suffering), they needed only to disclaim (as they did) the power of the Resurrection to reject Him totally.

Jesus' doctrine and life were alive with hope and the miraculous power of the Love of God. Sadduceeism amounted to deism in practice and left man hopelessly

awaiting death.

Secondly, where Mark mentioned the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15), Matthew recalled the Savior's warning against Sadducean "yeast" (Matthew 16:6).

"The worldliness of the Herod family," H. B. Swete explained, "was not far removed from the temper of the Sadducean aristocrates; and the supporters of the Herod dynasty were probably disposed to Sadducean ... views."

If the Sadducees could claim originality in anything, it had to be their ritual. What has been called "*punctilious externalism in religious practice*" devoid of spiritual life marked the third contaminator to the "bread."

"*Exact care must be taken, therefore,*" Jesus instructed His disciples, "*to exclude these things from your ministries*" (Mark 8:15). Worldliness, dead ritual, and any interpretation that denies the message of Redeeming love--together with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (both Matthew and Mark added)--in the words of Swete "*once admitted into the heart or into the society ... would spread until it rendered the spiritual service of God impossible.*"

To make matters worse, The High-priest was a Sadducee, and so were most of the members of the Sanhedrin, the 70 member high court of Israel. The Pharisees have now enlisted their aid. They brought a whole list of questions with them (Mark 8:11)--not as an innocent inquiry, that day was past but as an investigation designed to strengthen their case against Him. Pharisees in a common cause with Sadducees!! It was a most unlikely friendship. They were political enemies and as religious leaders in Israel, they were doctrinally at variance with one another on many "explosive" issues. This association may have been unprecedented. It certainly indicated the extent to which their hostility against the Savior had gone.

They asked for a "sign" -- one question they could

naturally agree on. (They were part of a generation that was possessed of a passion for signs.)

"*No sign shall be given you,*" Jesus sighed, more deeply (so the word shows) than before in Decapolis (Mark 7:34). His sorrow over Israel was stirred to its depths. They were not asking for healings and miracles. They wanted a statement--a doctrinal comment--which they could record against Him.

"*Jonah!!*" Jesus responded. "*Consider Jonah ... !*" (Matthew 15:4)

But the Savior did not elaborate on the point. As abruptly as He spoke, He headed out to sea again. Whatever the purpose behind that brief meeting, it seemed to confirm the Lord's comment to His disciples that He would be rejected of the Chief priests and the Elders (Mark 8:31).

Peter also remembered that this was the time Jesus began to expound upon His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31). These things were strangely new to the disciples. There is little wonder why Peter, for one, objected to the idea--at least in its literal form--and felt a need to "take the Savior" aside (Mark 8:32) and express his disappointment. Little wonder, too, that Jesus' counsel began to take on the form of a rebuke (Mark 8:17, 33). Their inability to understand the significance of recent events an example would be the feeding of the four thousand--and their insensitivity to the real issues--witness the Savior's deep concern about the "Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"--could no longer be tolerated. Jesus had only a few months left with them. Their faith was "little" (Matthew 16:8) still. Their ears were not hearing what He was declaring and whatever they did learn, in the course of time, they seemed to forget (Mark 8:18).

After healing a blind man somewhere near Bethsaida Julius where He fed the five thousand, He proceeded on His journey to Caesarea Philippi where He would spend at least one week alone with them addressing the issue of their insensitivity in spiritual matters (Mark 9:2; Matthew 17:1, Luke 9:28).

This blind man's healing (Mark 8:23 - 25) is the only incident on record where Jesus' touch did not bring instant and total healing. Jesus had to touch him again to restore his eyes completely. Why? The Lord's power had certainly not diminished, nor His desire to heal. Suffice it to say that not only did the Lord know in advance that this would be a gradual healing--for this explains the Lord's question put to the man: Do you see yet?--but also, this man in parable form exemplifies the twelve whose sight spiritually is ever so slowly being brought to perfect vision. The grammarian remarks on the word "restored" that it includes the ability to examine every object and interpret the phenomena correctly.

So would it be with His disciples--some day (I Corinthians 2:15). They saw things out of focus and caught only glimpses--as it were--of Jesus' true ministry. Gradually, however, they would see with cleared vision what now was a blurred image of Messianic hope. From Bethsaida, they walked north, following the course of the Jordan River to its source and-to Caesarea Philippi. [This area belonged to Philip, the son of King Herod, as its name indicates.] It was a long journey--over a relatively unfrequented road--to provide Jesus with the time to instruct His disciples. He began by inquiring after their present view of Himself. Even then, His first question was:

Whom do others say that I am? rather than Whom do you say that I am?

He proceeded very cautiously to share with them the

plan of redemption. This was certainly a turning point. His Galilean ministry was "practically" ended. The road to Calvary lay before Him. It was a moment of such crisis, that He had to prepare for it by prayer (Luke 9:18).

These discourses too on death and resurrection were for His twelve only (Mark 8:30). The public was carefully excluded from, these, very private sessions. On some deserted hillside or along some country path, Jesus slowly and quietly made His way, part of the time--one can assume--in deep prayerful thought and part of the while carefully sifting through all the details, sharing the next point with them concerning His upcoming death. Even here, it is not the Messiah who must die but the "Son of Man." In this form, the discourse on death could be more easily understood, more readily accepted (Mark 8: 31).

At some point in the conversation, perhaps while discussing the Glory that is to follow His Passion (Matthew 16:27, 28), He chose to add sight to sound and to give to at least three of the twelve just a glimpse of that Glory. Making their way to the foot of Mount Hermon, the nine were instructed to camp there for the night while Jesus took with Himself, Peter, James and John "up higher" into the mount and into the Truth.

Caesarea Philippi

"And after six days (from their arrival at Caesarea) Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John into a high mountain (every indicator suggests Mount Hermon rising 9200 feet at its highest peak, overlooking the vicinity of Caesarea and offering the solitude necessary for such an occasion as this. One of its southern "spurs" could have easily become Peter's "Holy Mount"-- 2 Peter 1:18) ... *and He was trans- figured before them.*" (Mark 9:2) Both Eastern and Western calendars give the date August 6, but the time and place is of little consequence. It is the event, itself, that raises the more significant questions.

Why were Peter, James and John permitted to attend this "summit" meeting? Why were Elijah and Moses invited and not other equally famous Old Testament personalities? The Transfiguration, itself, was not simply a change in our Lord's appearance. It was, more correctly, a "transformation" (as the word used shows) that revealed a totally "other" Jesus than the One the twelve were acquainted with. But why? And can there be any other significance to this event happening--as it did--just seven months (so we may estimate) before His death?

Taking with Him the "three," Jesus retired to the isolated hilltop where He would pass the night in prayer. He prayed, but they slept. Understandably, it was night and they were exhausted from the journey. "*While He prayed,*" Luke noted (Luke 9:29), His clothing began to shine as glaring sunlight reflecting off the perennial snows that covered the Mountain's peak (Mark 9:3). His face, too,

Matthew added (Matthew 17:2) began to glow as the sun itself. Had not Moses face "shone" as He communed with God in the Mount? (Exodus 34:29) Stephen's face, too, appeared to those about him to be angelic (Acts 6:15). Yet, as true as it is that through communion with God, one's face can take on, what H. D. Spence called a "*new and strange beauty*," with Jesus it was something more. It was almost as if His divinity began to shine through His humanity, as if the Glory of heaven broke upon Him with an intensity no mere mortal could endure.

Peter was aroused from sleep... as were the others. They awoke to find two men conversing with Jesus, and He with the sunlight of heaven emanating from every part of His being (Luke 9:32). Perhaps, the glow startled them or perhaps their ears began to slowly pick up on bits and pieces of the conversation that Jesus was having ... but with whom??

Sometime during the night, Moses and Elijah had appeared to discuss with Him His upcoming death at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). This had to be of great value to the Savior. He had been little encouraged by His "earthly" peers. Moses was an expert on the Law. Elijah could readily represent the prophets. Between them, they could re-affirm to Jesus, the man, the importance of His mission and offer the entire body of Old Testament Truth as proof.

How much of their conversation the disciples may have "overheard" is not known. Nor is it clear that they knew, until afterward, who the two "mountain-top" visitors were. Despite the mystery that still surrounded all that was happening, what they were privileged to witness had left its impression upon them.

Peter would later testify that it was this incident that brought to his soul an unshakeable faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ (2 Peter 1:16 - 18). It was the confirmation of everything he had believed and everything he would hereafter believe regarding His Lord (2 Peter 1:19) and, having now been an eyewitness of His "excellent glory," he would live in the anticipation of seeing it again when "the day dawns and the day star arises in (our) hearts." He, Jesus, is that day star. In a sense, believers led now by the written word and the promises find themselves longing more and more for His Sacred Presence. "It is the Glorified Christ, we want to see!!!" Peter was crying--ever since that day in the mount.

For John, this experience would be in some way repeated (Revelation 1:9 - 16). Both on the mount and on the Isle (of Patmos), he was given to view the Lord in His glorified form. John's reaction in the mount paralleled his Island experience. While on Patmos he wrote, "*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet* (paralyzed with fright) ..." (Revelation 1:17, Matthew 17:6). The first appearance served to identify the second manifestation. Despite all the mysteries attached to the vision on Patmos, one thing was perfectly clear: This was the glorified Son of Man standing before the beloved apostle (Revelation 1:13). John had seen Him before ... in the mount.

James did not live long enough to record his testimony. He was the first apostle to receive the martyr's crown ... and just the second Christian after Stephen--at least so the record indicates. And yet, there is nothing strange here in Christ revealing Himself to James in anticipation of the apostle's death. In like manner, Jesus revealed Himself to Stephen before his death (Acts 7:55). One glimpse alone of our Glorified Lord is sufficient to take the sting from death and give one, so blessed, the overwhelming desire to be with Him.

While in the mount, though, nothing was making clear sense, least of all, Peter's impulsiveness. "*Let us raise three tents here, one for you, Lord, and each of your glorified visitors!!*" The words seem to simply jump from between his lips. He neither knew what to say (Mark 9:6), nor once having spoken, why he said it (Luke 9:33). He felt that some response was required of him (Mark 9:5) oddly enough, even though no question was put to him nor any comment directed at him. In his defense, there was plenty of brushwood in the vicinity to make the tents and it was the season for it. The Feast of Tabernacles, at which time such tents were constructed, was just a month away. Furthermore, lest Peter's request appear to be the pondering of an unlearned mind, we need only to review the history of Christianity to discover that, as a whole, the idea has not been objectionable. Wherever the Lord shows Himself in some glorious fashion, another shrine is built. The Holy Land, itself, is "dotted" with church edifices marking some special visitation of God. Whenever He manifests Himself in some awe inspiring way, another book is written--so it seems--to enshrine the memory of it. The majority of testimonies though--it is safe to say--were not meant for publication. They were given that they might be lived out in front of others. There is nothing wrong with tents! Peter felt good about being in the Mount (Mark 9:5) and his idea of making tents merely expressed that delight. There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to make the ecstasy last, but Jesus must be on His way elsewhere ... down the mountain ... to where the people live with their needs ... and on to Calvary.

Oh, that the cloud might overshadow the church!! Oh, that the Lord from heaven might give clearly the message to our hearts trembling: "This is My beloved Son, HEAR YE HIM!" It was not the cloud that Peter remembered nor

the "heavenly" visitors but rather the voice of God (2 Peter 1:18). That is as it should be.

" ... Hear ye Him ... "

"*Suddenly*," Mark noted (Mark 9:8)--how quickly, too, Peter's thoughts must have changed--there was no Moses, no Elijah, and there would be no tents (not today). "*Jesus was found alone*." (Luke 9:36) One is reminded of the words of A. B. Simpson,

Once it was the blessing/ Now it is the Lord/ Once it was the
feeling/ Now it is His Word/ Once His gift I wanted/ Now, the
Giver own/ Once I sought for healing/ Now Himself alone.

"*And they came down from the mountain ...*" Mark concluding (Mark 9:9). We too must descend the mount of blessing to meet the suffering world in the valley below. Perhaps, unlike the three apostles--at the time--we can grasp the significance of the vision and leaving our place of spiritual enrichment, go immediately forth to be used of God.

The Foot of Mount Hermon

Upon His return to rejoin the other "nine" disciples, Jesus was warmly received by a crowd reacting as if His sudden re-appearance were an unexpected but delightful surprise. Their hearts must have "skipped a beat" to discover Him standing there. They ran to greet Him (Mark 9:15). His disciples had to be overwhelmed with relief to see Him. A situation had developed around them that not only marked them--most significant of all, in their own eyes--as failures but served their antagonists well to discredit the Lord's ministry as something which has passed into insignificance. [There would always be a few who would remember the touch of the Master and no amount of logic could lessen the impression (John 9:25).] But, we must "feel" for nine disciples who were not privileged yet to see His "Majesty." (2 Peter 1:16) Their faith already weak was now in danger of succumbing altogether. Against the pleadings of a man in anguish over his son wasting away with seizure (Luke 9:40) and the almost sadistic attack of the critics who themselves "seized" this opportunity to "theologize" over the moment (Mark 9:14, 16), the nine stood defenseless.

Effortlessly the Scribes drove their point home to a crowd of bystanders who could see for themselves how little this miraculous power-- the disciples of Jesus were reported to have-- actually was.

"What is this all about?" Jesus pointedly wanted to

know. Our Lord's question showed that He not only "grasped" the situation but was well prepared to meet it. He took matters into His own hands at once relieving the disciples and disappointing the Scribes who must have known that the moment of victory had again alluded them.

From somewhere in the middle of the crowd the answer came (Mark 9:17).

"Teacher, I have brought my son to you! He has a demon and cannot talk (Mark 9:17).

He has seizures frequently. First he screams (Luke 9:39) and then he is thrown to the ground in convulsions, foaming at the mouth and grating his teeth (Mark 9:18). His muscles contract in spasm; and before it is over he is badly bruised and hurt (Luke 9:39) and it goes on and on and on and I cannot do anything to help him!! .. (Matthew 17:15 & Mark 9:22). Oftentimes this spirit has cast him into the fire and water to destroy him!! ... When I could not find you," the man, we can picture, talked rapidly in his excitement, "*I implored your disciples to cast it out, but they could not!!*" (Luke 9:40)

"*Oh faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you!*" Jesus rebuked the Jews and the Scribes, though not without a glance--we have to believe at His own disciples. He seemed to weary of their unbelief and the weakness of their faith (Mark 9:19, Luke 9:41).

"How long shall I have to forbear! How infinitely patient I must be with you! When will your faith be strong enough to deal decisively with this kind of situation!!"

He had to be looking directly at the twelve (Matthew 17:17). "*Bring him to Me!*" Jesus spoke with a commanding voice. The lad, no doubt, had been isolated from the crowd for fear of another "attack." And the worst did happen. "*While he was coming,*" Luke continued (Luke 9:42), the boy walking under his own power, another "paroxysm"--

the scholars call it--hurled him helplessly to the ground. He had to be carried the rest of the way (Mark 9:20), forcibly brought to the Savior's feet.

"How long has he been this way?" Jesus asked the anxious father. The Master needs no information--least of all when the first spasm was recorded--to effect healing. But it is the father and the disciples that must be given to know certain things before such a healing could take place.

"He was just a child when the first one came over him ... if You can, please help us!!!" the man quickly responded. It is not just the lad that needs the Master but the father as well.

"If you can!" Jesus repeated the father's words. "It is for you rather than Me to decide whether this thing can be done. All things are possible to him that believes" (Mark 9:23).

"The man's strength of feeling," Swete observed, *"shews itself in a cry as piercing as that of the demoniac son."* He cried aloud--some believe with tears coursing down his cheeks--*"I believe, Jesus, I believe ... please help me to believe!!!"* (Mark 9:24)

The lad's need of healing had not only created a scene--the residents were running to the spot (Mark 9:25)--but Jesus was concerned about the privacy required under such circumstances. This was no public concern. There was nothing to teach them or show them. The Savior was--to be accurate--avoiding public ministry at this time in His life. Beside, demons are never a public matter. The curious and those interested in display are, by their attitude and lack of knowledge in such "areas," inviting serious trouble upon themselves. The Master moved quickly. Addressing the demon, He did not simply say "Out!" He first made clear undeniable reference to His own authority. *"It is I, who speak to you, deaf and dumb spirit, It is I, not the twelve, that am ordering you immediately to leave this lad ... and*

never again enter him!!" Jesus spoke with power.

This lad would be forever free. But the demon would not leave without first revenging itself upon its victim in violent and prolonged convulsions (Mark 9:26). When it was over, the boy lay lifeless on the ground.

"*He is dead,*" the message rippled through the crowd, but he was only exhausted. Jesus extended His hand--as He had done on a few other occasions (Mark 1:31 and 5:41)--and helping the boy to his feet, presented him to his father--a gift of the mighty power of God (Luke 9:43).

In privacy (Mark 9:28), at the earliest possible opportunity, the "nine" had to find out why they had failed. Why couldn't they cast this demon from the boy? (Mark 9:28) "*This class of demon,*" Jesus explained, "*will not come out at your command unless first you have been empowered in prayer.* Evil spirits discern the lack of power that you receive in prayer. That is why it would not leave--Prayer is the key!" (Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29)

The early church interpreted this to include fasting, a natural companion to prayer. Either way, it is important to underline two words used in this account that link it with the previous verses regarding the Transfiguration of Jesus. The words are "*prayer*" found in Mark 9:29 and Matthew 17:21 and "*power*" recorded in Luke 9:43. The power of God is the "majesty " of God as Peter saw it in the Mount (2 Peter 1:16) and "praying" is what the Savior was doing that entire night before (Luke 9:28). This leads to the very comfortable conclusion that though only three of the twelve disciples were privileged to see a "visible" display of His power or majesty, all twelve saw that majesty in action at the base of the hill. The power of God does not simply glow, it works! Jesus was not interested in spiritual experiences, but in meeting needs. An all night prayer

meeting with Elijah and Moses--as blessed as it no doubt was--served a far more useful purpose when He reached the lad. And should it not be that way with us? Even the more exhilarating "spirit-lifting" experiences in prayer are never an end in themselves. It would be as if Moses upon viewing the burning bush returned to his sheep to ponder the wonderful memory of it. Peter's "roof-top" vision may have--to some folk--given proof of the Apostle's closeness to God. It was, however, what he did with the vision that became the ultimate test of his spiritual strength. Perhaps, one could be so bold as to conclude from all of this that the emphasis must be taken off of the "church service" and placed rightfully on the "service of the church." But while the disciples may have been wondering over this, Jesus resumed his previous conversation with them (Luke 9: 43).

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears," He continued, "the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men (Luke 9:44), they shall kill Him (Mark 9:31) but three days afterward He shall be raised again (Matthew 17: 23).

The simple Gospel message--often unadorned by visible displays and glowing demonstrations of the healing power of God--is nonetheless the only thing that concerned the Savior at this moment. Perhaps, it is the only thing that should concern us.

Leaving their retreat at the foot of Mt. Hermon, they followed the west bank of the Jordan. They may have broken up into small parties (Matthew's word "abode" [Matthew 17:22] is better translated "reassembled") to escape detection (Mark 9:30). The twelve were in part perplexed {Luke 9:45} and in part already grieving over His talk of death (Matthew 17:28). Even if opportunity was there to "talk it through" it was far too painful for them to discuss with Him anyhow (Mark 9:32).

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He did mention one other word as well--just this moment introduced into His conversations with them. He spoke of being "delivered" (Luke 9:44)--betrayed!! But by whom?? How?? Why??

There would be better days ahead for the disciples--more encouraging moments. For now, we must leave them here--with Jesus returning into Galilee (Matthew 17:22, Mark 9: 30).

Capernaum

Once more before leaving for Jerusalem, Jesus visited His "own city" Capernaum (Matthew 17:24). He was, in effect, saying His final "goodbyes" to those Galilean towns, such as Chorazin and Bethsaida, that--although blinded to the fact--while the Savior was in residence, had been privileged with a visitation from God. It could be written that "*the Kingdom of God was come nigh unto them*" (Luke 10:11); for, "*mighty miracles were done there.*" Matthew bore witness (Matthew 11:21). This was a chapter in our Savior's life not written (John 21:25). His ministry was concentrated among them. Had Tyre and Sidon--and even Sodom, for that matter--been so honored, they would have with repentant heart welcomed Him. "Proud" Capernaum (Luke 10: 15) was not so.

" ... His own received Him not." (John 1:11)

It is a sad comment in "closing the book" on Galilee that we read in Matthew (17:24-27), recollecting the account: Peter was approached to contribute to the Temple treasury what had been in days gone by a half-shekel required for every man over twenty years of age (Exodus 30:13). Jesus feeling no legal obligation to pay it, nonetheless, to prevent ill-will that could lead to suspicion and animosity that could in turn hinder the cause for which He had come, sent Peter fishing for the "money." (Jesus had not come to violate the Law but to fulfill it.) Peter's first catch held a stater in its mouth. This was exactly the amount needed But this miracle is not the emphasis of the to pay for both Jesus· and himself. story. The whole point is that they wanted the shekel but not the Savior. They

asked for their money but not their Messiah. A tax levied for the service of God (in maintaining the Temple) did nothing to honor the Son of God.

"What do you think, Simon?" Jesus asked. "Do earthly kings require their own children to pay the tax used to maintain their palaces! Absolutely not! Much less would it be appropriate in this case for the Son of the King of kings to be obligated to finance the maintenance of the Temple--in a sense--the Palace of God. I will not deny My Sonship, but I will not offend on this point either! ...Bait your hook, Simon ... is that not what they are trying to do ... regarding Me!!"

Jesus knew what the true issue was. The "*time had come*" Luke continued (Luke 9:51) for Jesus to "*set His face*" toward Jerusalem. Intending to make His way through Samaria He sought to reserve lodging in one of their towns (Luke 9:52). They, however, took offense to discover that He was only "passing through" and immediately displayed their "No Vacancy" sign. The incident will be remembered for the outraged zeal of the Sons of Thunder, James and John, who claiming justification for their feelings by reference to Elijah (2 Kings 1:10) wanted to destroy them all who hereafter would have so little regard for the Savior's presence among them!! (This same John would later return with Peter to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritan believers -- Acts 8:14 - 17). "John," Jesus interrupted rather sternly, "*You do not know what you are saying. I have come to save, not destroy!... and they went to another village.* (Luke 9:55, 56)

Where was this "other village"? H. D. Spence observed, "The word "another" suggests that our Lord, after the insult ... by the Samaritans turned His steps to a Jewish community." Perhaps. The only thing for sure is that He was on His way to Jerusalem, not to observe the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2), but to complete His course to Calvary. For this reason, when a scribe approached (Luke

9:57; Matthew 8:19) claiming a desire to follow Him, Jesus had to correct the man; for, he did not know, in reality, where the Savior was going. Along the way, there would--no doubt--be others seeking to join the twelve. We know there were at least seventy (Luke 10:1) that were ready in a limited sense to do a work for the Savior. When He commissioned them and where is not clear, however. Only the reason Why is clear:

"Pray that the Lord of the Harvest would send laborers into His harvest. (Luke 10:2).

Jesus revealed His deepest burden for the souls of men. We know also that He sent them "on ahead." Whatever towns or cities they ministered in, He, Himself, later had intentions of visiting (Luke 10:1). This would seem to exclude Galilee, which He had just left, and Samaria, which had just refused Him lodging. Perhaps, A. T. Robertson is correct in suggesting that the work of the "70" would become part of what has been called His later Judean Ministry. It is believed to have begun when He reached Jerusalem and attended the next important event on His calendar, the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7). F. L. Godet captures the moment of Jesus' return to the Beloved City:

"Seven months had elapsed without any appearance of Jesus at Jerusalem. The exasperation of the rulers, whose murderous character John had recognized from the beginning (John 5:16), had for a moment become calm; but the fire was ever smoldering under the ashes. At the first appearance of Jesus in the Capital, the flame could not fail to burst forth anew, and with a redoubled violence."

Jerusalem

We are also indebted to Godet for a summary of the facts regarding The Feast of Tabernacles, this third and last of the great feasts (Passover and Pentecost being the other two). The Feast of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (October) and extended eight days during which time the people dwelt in tents made of leafy branches, on the roofs of houses, in the streets and along the sides of the roads around Jerusalem. This was done in commemoration of the forty years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. Even a libation was made each morning of the feast to recall to mind the water springing forth from the rock (Deuteronomy 8:15; Numbers 20:11). Being the last of the great feasts and as Jesus had not attended either of the previous two that year, the disciples naturally assumed "therefore" (John 7:3) that He would celebrate this one. His brothers (as the text reads-- John 7:3) also reasoned that it would be an excellent opportunity for Him to be officially recognized. (We cannot be sure to what degree they may have sought to reveal the Master--as a mere prophet in Israel or in the more definite sense as the Messiah that is to come.) In either case, His place was at Jerusalem-- in their opinion.

Why the secrecy, Lord, if you are truly the Messiah? Why not take advantage of the feast to amass a large and regular following? The crowds that did gather about Him were a "fluctuating multitude." Earlier successes in Judea (John 4:1) had lost their importance; for, Jesus did not "follow through" to bring Israel to the realization of Who He really was. Any "talk" of His Messiahship was mere

private conversation with the twelve who not only struggled with some of the details of that ongoing dialogue but were strictly forbidden from sharing any of it with the rest of Israel. He claimed to be the Messiah, but did absolutely nothing to show it.

"*Manifest yourself to the world, Jesus!*" His brothers urged Him on (John 7:4). Undeniably, the question of His Messiahship could not be settled in Galilee. Jesus knew this too. Center stage in Israel, any Jew knew, was Jerusalem, the place where one's acceptance--or rejection--by the Jewish people had a certain finality about it. It would be the pinnacle of success (as well Satan knew, Matthew 4:5) or, for some, the place of utter social and political ruin. Jesus knew that the day would come to bring Himself into public view as the Messiah but not as His brothers supposed at this feast but rather six months hence at Passover. Then, He would go up to die. As He stated it for the present, "*My time has not yet come.*" (John 7:6)

In secret, however, not as a change of mind or heart, but as He originally intended to visit the city at the time of the feast (although He would not participate in the feast), He arrived there with His disciples. Thus, He avoided the danger of being discovered and brought to trial earlier than God's schedule required. Beside, any new movement of enthusiasm might disrupt everything. The Savior, in a sense, walked the tight-rope between those holding the crown of gold and those waiting with the crown of thorns to seize Him. The state of their minds, as revealed by John (John 7:11 - 13), proved how real the danger. "... *the Jews sought Him at the feast ...*"

"The first agitation had subsided," Godet continues, "everyone was quietly attending to the celebration of the feast, when all at once Jesus appears in the Temple and sets Himself to the work of teaching."

It was just enough surprise to confuse His antagonists for what little time He needed to proclaim His message. Again, as on a previous occasion (John 6), there is a discernible shift in His speech as He proceeds from a defense to a warning (John 7:14-36). "*How does this man know whereof He speaks!*" Someone in the crowd began to agitate an already excited and divided multitude (John 7:14, 15). "*He has not attended the schools of the masters!*"

Upon discovering the power and authority with which Jesus spoke, those "would-be" teachers of the Scripture had no other recourse than to question His credentials. When they could not effectively attack His message, they attacked Him. And since He had not received any "formal" rabbinical teaching--a fact generally known-- they felt sure of their support from the crowd on that basis.

"*My teaching is not mine.*" Jesus responded. True, He had not attended the schools of the Rabbis, but He had received His message from a still higher school ... it came from God! (John 7:16, 17) "*But if you would know this yourselves,*" Jesus admonished, "*you must will to do His will.*" The true documentation of the teachings of our Lord are not in books but in lives. He seemed to be paraphrasing an earlier remark (John 3:21) made to Nicodemus, "*He that practices the Truth comes to the Light.*"

When a messenger's sole desire is to communicate the message he was commissioned to bring, and he does this faithfully without any personal interpretation to alter its meaning, he cannot be accused of seeking glory or position for himself (John 7:18). Jesus effectively argued, "This is credential enough." (This was the very sentiment of Peter not only regarding Christ but everyone who helped author the Word of Life (2 Peter 1:20, 31). Jesus by these words not only defends His credentials but His conduct as well,

especially as regards the area of greatest tension between Himself and those who accused Him of illegally healing on the Sabbath Day (John 7:19-23).

The reason for writing this brief History of our Lord's ministry was not to include an exposition of His teachings--that is a volume in itself. However, we must pause with delight to observe the skill with which He appeals to Scripture *not* to justify His conduct and practices, but to give the clear interpretation and to show by His life how it is to be applied and fulfilled.

"... and for this ... you seek to kill Me!" Jesus spoke with a sudden burst of emotion.

"*You are possessed!*" The multitude recoiled in anger--perhaps for some as a result of being discovered; for, they did seek to kill Him, but the surprise of their attack was gone. Others, in being honest with themselves, had to confess total indifference whether He lived or died. Still, others had to be genuinely offended if-they thought for a second that Jesus was addressing them--they were there to crown Him king!

"*You art possessed!*" (John 7:20). The crowd saw Him as one dangerously ill with melancholy. He seemed on the verge of a collapse.

It is in Jerusalem that one is tried and where one's doctrine is put to the test. It is, therefore, the inhabitants of Jerusalem (John 7:25 - 27) that must decide. Since the Messiah is to come--in their theological understanding--unexpectedly, and since so much--supposedly--is known about Jesus, He cannot, therefore, be the Messiah. It was so clear cut an issue with them. Unlike their visiting compatriots from Galilee and elsewhere, they even knew of the plot to arrest Him. What confused them was why it was not being carried out. The dynamics at work, not only

regarding crowd behavior but also regarding the Providence of God prevented the rulers, at this time, from moving against Him (John 7:30). "*They sought to take Him; and yet no one laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come.*" For this reason, Jesus could speak openly. (John 7:28, 29). They could not feign ignorance concerning Him or His origin and mission. "*.. You know me!!*" He cried loud enough for every ruler to hear! "*Your problem is that you do not know God!!*" The severity of His charge, like flint against flint, must have struck them with great force. It is remarkable that the "powder keg" of their intense hatred toward Him did not ignite. The fuse, however, was lit (John 7:32). " *... the chief-priests sent officers to take Him ...* " Godet calls this the "*first judicial measure taken against Jesus.*"

Godet explains, "The officers that were sent undoubtedly did not have orders to seize Him immediately They were to mingle in the crowds and, taking advantage of a favorable moment when Jesus should give them some handle against Him, and when the wind of popular opinion should happen to turn, to get possession of Him and bring Him before the Sanhedrin."

"*On the last day of the feast*" (John 7: 37), all the people abandoned their temporary tent-dwellings and went in procession to the Temple before returning home. It seemed in effect, all of Israel was called together, waiting to hear our Lord's closing remarks. Perhaps it was the libation or the text the Rabbis used (Isaiah 12:3, "*Ye shall draw water with joy out of the well of Salvation*") that provided Jesus with His opportunity. He was in context not only with the day's activities but with the spiritual need of His listeners when He spoke with a loud voice as John recalled Him loudly entreating,

"IF ANY THIRSTS, LET HIM COME TO ME and drink; he that believes on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

But Jesus, even with the ritual of the libation affording Him opportunity to refer to Himself as the source of living water, was not explaining the symbolism of the ceremony. His attention had to be drawn to Moses and the rock in the wilderness from whence came the ceremony. He *was* that Rock which once struck would provide water for all to drink!! At each feast He attended, He provided the true meaning behind the symbols.

1. In chapter two, He was the true Temple;
2. In chapter three, the true "brazen serpent" (John 3:14);
3. In chapter six, the true manna, and now here
4. In chapter seven, the true Rock.

At the last feast He will attend, Passover, He will present Himself not just in explanation of the symbolism but in a most literal and real way ... the Paschal Lamb.

The Land of Judea

The next three months had to be filled with controversy for the Savior--particularly, if it is clear that He spent them in Judea. The wick of Pharisaic patience was burning ever shorter (Luke 11:53, 54). Not just the religious leaders, the "Jews," John quickly added (his word for all those in Israel who were hostile toward Christ, and later, Christianity) "took up stones to cast at Him. But Jesus hid Himself." (John 8:59) These were days characterized on His part by the message in parable form of His crucifixion (John 10:1-21)--only now a few months away--and for His antagonists, renewed hatred over His Sabbath-day activities (John 9:16). The most brilliant minds in Judea were being summoned to put our Lord's doctrine to the test (Luke 10:25 - 37). Accusations regarding His power and authority intended to discredit Him were beginning to take root in the hearts of His countrymen (Luke 11:15).

And Jesus was responding with His own brand of "woes" (Luke 10:13; 11:42) and His own style of "hard-preaching" (John 8:44) that is always guaranteed to rouse the devil's children to indignation. The common people, who must have known that He was from Nazareth (John 7:41), now, in an effort to justify their hostility toward Him, "wrote Him off" as a possessed maniac from Samaria (John 8:48, 52).

Notwithstanding this ominous cloud that darkened our Savior's sky, there were occasional rays of sunlight breaking through. There were the "seventy" to whom Jesus prophesied victory in His campaign against sin (Luke

10:18-19). He even "leaped into the air" (or so His heart did) for joy over the spiritual insight they were receiving (Luke 10:21). And Martha and Mary were always a joy to fellowship with (Luke 10:38, 39). Jesus would often spend relaxing moments with them and their brother, Lazarus, (John 11:5) whom He loved dearly. But outside these brief retreats, the battle raged on. It was Jesus who led the invasion (Luke 10:19) and it was the sword of His message that He wielded.

The Gospel will always invade society. There is no other way to bring it to hearts comfortable in sin. It will always be a *"two-edged sword piercing ..."* (Hebrews 4:12). The Gospel is no ordinary message. It is the *"power of God"* Paul reminded us, *"unto salvation for all those who believe."* (Romans 1:16) Powerful it is!! *"The preaching of the Cross,"* Paul told the Corinthian church *"will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."* (I Corinthians 1:18, 19) The philosopher's insight, once thought profound, into life's most perplexing ambiguities, in the light of the teachings of Christ, has become meaningless chatter. H. Kerr Taylor, a retired evangelistic missionary to China, tells it this way:

When the great Emperor Yao of China mounted the throne, an ancient philosopher of the time in that land is said to have remarked, "Blow out the candles; the sun is up!" Centuries later when in New York City, the well-known Chinese scholar, philosopher and author, Dr. Lin Yu Tang, after a lifetime of study made his profession of faith in Jesus Christ, he wrote:

The world of Jesus is the world of sunlight by comparison with that of all the sages and philosophers and the schoolmen of any country. It is like the Jungfrau which stands above the glaciers in the world of snow and seems to touch heaven itself. Jesus' teachings have that immediacy and clarity and simplicity which puts to shame all other efforts of men's minds to know God or to inquire after God.

Then, he added, quoting the ancient philosopher, "Blow out the candles!" The sun is up!

No wonder the Pharisees were "up in arms." They were

fighting for their religious life. It is comparable to the cry of pagan Ephesus to save the worship of the goddess Diana in the face of this powerful Gospel message on the lips of Paul (Acts 19:26-28). One can envision the Pharisees in frenzied excitement crying, "*Our doctrine is in danger of being set at nought! ... Great is the religion of the Pharisees!!*" (John 12:19) It will never be any other way. The teachings of Christ will never become socially acceptable. They will never be popular. At those times that it may appear otherwise, perhaps the church should give closer attention to its message to see if is indeed *..the Gospel*.

Paul knew. "*Preach the Word,*" he admonished Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2), understanding that the society would soon say to the preacher, "We cannot endure anymore! Preach something else! Give us a message we want to hear!"

"And they shall turn from the Truth." (2 Timothy 4:3,4)

All this is happening to the Lord during these last few months of His earthly sojourn and subsequently to the church if it is willing to "*fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.*" (Colossians 1:24) It may seem too unbelievable for some to accept. They would, perhaps, re-interpret the passages before us in an effort--not to divest them of every hint of conflict but--to make the account to their eyes, slightly less stormy, and put in a little more blue sky. The real story, however, is a cross and a lonely and painful journey leading up to it for the Savior of mankind. There is no other way to write this period in our Lord's life. From this point on, each moment would be followed by another more intense. Those who stood against Jesus were holding stones (John 10:31).

But there is a balance to the Work of God: Others were

believing (John 10:42, Luke 13:18-21).

For the Lord's part, warning followed warning (Luke 11:37 - 13:17). The urgency in His voice was growing. He seemed to be speaking with more and more emotion as if soon all of heaven would be summoned to prove Him right. What He stressed now in parables (Luke 13:1-9) would soon be emphasized with miracles (Luke 19:45-48). His ideas were uncommon. He instructed His disciples to "sellout" (Luke 12:33). It was as if He knew that soon those whose lives were invested in material things would be left utterly destitute and "bankrupt". He censured the ignorance of the crowd (Luke 12:54-59). It was ironic to Him that a people who prided themselves on their insight lacked even the simplest understanding of what was happening. Wisdom truly was "crying ... in the streets." (Proverbs 1:20) In the person of Jesus. The long awaited and hoped for visitation of God was becoming history, and they did not know it. As with John the Baptist, now it was happening with the Savior. H. D. Spence probably said it best:

Many in Israel knew (John) indeed was a great prophet of the Lord. His burning words had penetrated far and wide; vast crowds had heard the awful sounds with breathless awe; but no one heeded, and the people watched him die. And now-- (Jesus). He had told them all; no sign of power was wanting to His ministry, and it was over and the people had not repented.

In a spiritual sense, they would pay dearly for the lack of discernment (Luke 12:59).

"Repent!" Jesus cried. "Or perish!" (Luke 13:3)

His "Sabbath day" healings, too, were a continuing irritation to His "adversaries" (Luke 13:17). But if they could "loose" their own oxen on the Sabbath, Jesus reasoned, He certainly could "loose" a daughter of Israel from her sickness! (Luke 13: 15, 16). In what seemed to be an ongoing debate over our Lord's activities, He was

proving to be the better contestant. His opponents were being put to public shame. More than what He said, what He did brought recognition from those who came to observe (Luke 13: 17).

In more than one way: It was winter (John 10:22). The love of many in Israel toward the Savior was growing colder and colder. If spring be the first season, the time for new beginnings, winter had to represent an end to things. Jesus' presence in Jerusalem during Hanukah, the Feast of Dedication (December) would represent the last official act of this His last official tour of Judea before His crucifixion (John 10:22-39).

The Land of Perea

"And He went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there He abode" (John 10:40). I sometimes wonder if Jesus, as I would, took a stroll down memory lane, back to His roots, to the place where His ministry began, to the place of His baptism and where He and His cousin, John, shared a common but private vision for the souls of men. It was here in Perea (Mark 10:1; Luke 13:22) that He would find a brief respite from the hatred of His countrymen. It was here in Perea that He would find open hearts (John 10:42) due largely to the work of His forerunner and cousin, John the Baptist. It was here He would momentarily lose Himself among "friends" who always were receptive to His message. Here He could preach openly while the fire of heaven burned ever brighter in His soul (Luke 13:24-- 30). Nonetheless, here His burden for Israel would overwhelm Him (Luke 13:34, 35). As He journeyed through the region, He slowly followed His heart back to Jerusalem (Luke 13:22). It was as if some force were uncontrollably pulling Him, compelling Him to return.

In an effort to frighten the Savior back into Judea, away from the protection of a friendly multitude and back to a people who would welcome Him with stones, the Pharisees had a plan. It seems, Jewish intelligence had confirmed a plot of Herod to murder the Master (Luke 13:31). (Perea was assigned Herod by the Caesar to rule and keep order.) The Tetrarch, who was living in adultery married to Herodias his brother's former wife, was uneasy with the Lord's continued presence in his Region. Perhaps, through

this news, the Savior could be intimidated to leave at once for Jerusalem.

Not so! "*Tell that she-fox,*" Jesus retorted, He was, perhaps referring to Herodias rather than Herod, "*I have a work here! No message, friendly or otherwise will turn me from my purpose. I shall not trouble him (Herod) long--just today and tomorrow*"--proverbial for "a short time" (Luke 13:32). Jesus' words were uncommonly explosive. Even the Savior has the right to speak with intensity or to cry His heart out (Luke 13:34; Hebrews 5:7). The end of His earthly sojourn was not far away now. Thus, He can--and indeed must--speak candidly. He can eat breakfast with a Pharisee and now explain to him how Israel's invitation to the feast of Heaven--at the marriage supper of the Lamb of God--has been rejected (Luke 14:1, 24); how God's kingdom consequently will be opened to the Gentiles (Luke 13:28, 29). He could talk about the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-- 35) and defend His openness to receive publicans and sinners into their number (Luke 15:1-- 32). He could rebuke (Luke 16:14-- 31) and warn (Luke 17:1-10) with all the fury of an outraged God. It was in fact His duty to speak out (Luke 17:10). Shamelessly and resolvedly He brought the Word of God to His hearers.

"Everything is henceforth ripe for the catastrophe," Godet wrote, "The development begun in chapter five (of John's Gospel) reaches its utmost limit. Yet one more good work, and the condemnation of Jesus will be finally pronounced."

That "good work" is recorded in John chapter eleven. It is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The Master's tour through Perea is brought to an end by this return visit to Bethany (John 11:1). This miracle would be the crowning one of His career of three[?] "short" years. But it was intended to be awesome and inspiring for other reasons. It was this miracle that called forth an emergency session of the Sanhedrin to deal with the immediate problem of

"Jesus" (John 11:47-- 53). He has returned and by doing a miracle of this magnitude, He has become a decided threat to their authority. They argued, "Without our strong influence, the Romans will soon overrun us and we will lose our identity as a nation!" Things were serious!

The raising of Lazarus and our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem on "palm-day" (John 12: 17, 18) are inseparably part of the same account. The one led to the other. In the plan of God, this one miracle plays such an important part as to alone shape the events that remain leading to Golgotha. For this reason, we must pause at the tomb of this beloved friend. We must linger in these verses in John eleven. In itself, it is a summary of the last three years. The feelings of each participant somehow reflect their understanding--not only of the situation before them but--of the Savior's reason for coming.

Bethany

Godet wrote, "No scene in this gospel (of John) is presented in so detailed and dramatic a manner. There is none from which appears more distinctly the character of Jesus as at once perfectly divine and perfectly human, and none which more fully justifies the central declaration of the Prologue: "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:1).

It is this declaration (the Word made flesh) that is so graphically underlined in what is the shortest verse in the Bible: "*Jesus wept.*" (John 11:35) There is a ministry in tears. Weeping plays an important part in the work of God (Luke 6:21). There is something positive to say about those times when the emotions overflow the container of the heart. Ministry produces burdens. One cannot dive into the water without getting wet. If a believer "wades" on the shore of opportunity to serve in the Kingdom of God, his or her emotional response to the will of God will be equally as "shallow." It is impossible--on the other hand--to become immersed in the work of God without becoming equally and emotionally immersed in its victories and frustrations. It is "*weeping (because of) ... the enemies of the Cross ...*" (Philippians 3:18) It is a burden expressed without words for the backslider (2 Corinthians 2:4). It is praying with tears that for the sake of others: the will of the Lord be done in *my* life (Hebrews 5:7). It is a sermon--etched by its constant re-occurrence on the face of the true servant of Christ (Acts 20:19, 31) of the undying love of God. It is the pain of the young minister seeking earnestly Divine approval (2 Timothy 1:4). The servant of God does not only weep for another, but he or she weeps with those finding themselves otherwise alone in the valley of deep sorrow.

Godet tells us that the commentator Hengstenberg wrote concerning Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, "*One does not raise the dead with a heart of stone*" (Hebrews 2:17). There is something to be said for "*weeping with those who weep ...*" (Romans 12:15). Weeping is a sign of one's sensitivity to another's sorrow, for someone in need, silently but fervently raised to God. (Isaiah 66:2). There are times when no one can offer more. It is a prayer. Unfortunately, many are unaware of the restoring power of a tear. Some, feeling a need to say something, would replace it with so many meaningless words.

But Jesus wept (John 11:35).

"Jesus wept" means silent tears moistening the cheeks, flowing quietly down the face. There are no words. Oh, how much meaning is to be found in these two words. "*These tears,*" H. R. Reynolds related, "*have been for all the ages a grand testimony to the fulness of His humanity, and also a Divine revelation of the very heart of God.*" Never let a man say that God does not weep! Never believe for a second that human misery goes unnoticed by Him!!

"*Behold how He loved him!*" the Jews said (John 11:36). Did He cry, though, because He missed Lazarus, whom shortly--the Master knew already--would in turn invite Him back to dinner!! (John 12:2)???

Behold how He loved *Martha* and *Mary*!!! Martha and Mary--like all siblings--were different. Mary seemed to be emotionally fragile. While Martha sought the Lord out to express her regret that He had not been able to be present to heal her brother. Mary stayed at home secluded in some private corner of the house quietly grieving (John 11:20). Even the Jews, who were notably hostile toward the Savior, were concerned for Mary's welfare (John 11:31). When she finally left the house and that only after Martha assured her

of the whereabouts of the Master and that He specifically asked for her, the Jews followed. They did not think it advisable to leave Mary alone at the gravesite. They followed in a gesture of concern. Coming to Jesus--and very unlike Martha--Mary fell at His feet (John 11:32). This was her favorite place (Luke 10:39; John 12:3). Also, unlike Martha, she did not seek consolation in the hope of the Resurrection at the end of time (John 11:24). Her beliefs did not seem--at this time--to help her.

Mary's explanation for these feelings might be found in a closer look at her arrangement of the words common to both her and Martha (John 11:21 and 32). Whereas Martha simply stated her regret for our Lord's absence, Mary by shifting the order of the words emphasized her closeness to Lazarus: "*MY* Brother, Jesus, had you been here would not have died!" she cried. It was as if a part of herself had died with him.

"Thus, in Martha," Godet summarized, "there is a nature practical and full of elasticity, capable of energetically reacting against a depressing feeling; in Mary, a sensibility given up, without the least trace of reaction, to the feeling which absorbs her Jesus knows the human heart too well to attempt to apply to Mary the method ... employed with Martha. With a grief like hers, there is no need of teaching and speaking "

"Jesus wept."

Behold, how He loved the *Jews!!!* It was they who made Him "*groan*" (John 11:33). It was they who "*troubled Him.*" (These were not altogether unfamiliar feelings for our Lord. He was deeply moved and disturbed (as the words signify) on more than just this occasion [Matthew 9:30; John 12:27; 13:21].) His feelings were stirred to their depth. No wonder, He wept. He was possessed of a strange blend of emotions: Anger and grief. And yet, the shade of one's feelings is never a single color. There is always a mix. Especially when the group before you includes Mary, who

is unable on her own to rise above her sorrow and the Jews, whose mourning is for the better part a public display of sympathy that lacks depth; Jews, who have not forgotten their hatred toward the Savior; Jews, who may appear to be calling a temporary truce, but who are, in fact, seeking occasion even in this to condemn Him (John 11:37, 38).

Godet again writes, "... the sobs which He hears around Him urge Him to accomplish the raising of His friend to life; but, on the other hand, He knows that to yield to this ... , and to cause the Glory of the Father to break forth conspicuously at this moment, is to sign the sentence of His own death.... From the most glorious of His miracles, they will draw a ground of condemnation against Him. A portion of those very persons whose sighs were pressing Him to act, will be among those who will cause Him to pay with His life for the crime of having vanquished death."

Jesus wept (compare Luke 19:41).

Behold, How He loved His *disciples*. This miracle was designed to increase their faith (John 11:15). It would be the means by which the Glory of God would be manifested in the greatest possible splendor unto them. "*I am glad for your sakes!*" Jesus exclaimed (John 11:15). It is not a march to the death, Thomas (John 11:16), though you are not totally lacking in insight. "*It is for the Glory of God* (John 11:4) *that we return to Judea,*" Jesus explained. Not only does Jesus explain the benefits of surrendered service, but He does it in a loving manner. "*We have so few hours of daylight left to us,*" He counseled. "*Let us work for the Glory of God, while we are able*" (John 11:9). "*Let us go*" (John 11:15)

"Jesus wept."

Behold, How He loved the *Father!* (John 11:41, 42) Nothing other than His love for the Father could draw Him back to Judea. Ultimately for all of us in the midst of opposition, criticism, and affliction, the true test of our spiritual strength is the size of our heart toward God. No

other motivation will take us beyond the point where the immediate blessings and the approvals of those around us cease. Somewhere along the road of service to God, the path begins to narrow, and becomes rugged, and only our love for God bids us to continue the journey.

"Jesus wept."

Behold, How He loves *you* and *me*. Lazarus has to represent every believer. And Jesus' love in this regard is most evident. Jesus' own words declare the message. "*I am the Resurrection,*" He reassured Martha (John 11:25). He does not provide a resurrection. He does not make it happen by His power. He *IS* the Resurrection, and He makes it happen by His presence. Having Jesus is having life! Knowing Him is to be already passed from death unto life. (I John 3:14) Like darkness flees when the light shines, so death flees from the Presence of Jesus, the Source of eternal light (John 1:4). As He shouted once at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:43), He will someday shout at the tomb of every saint that sleeps in the grave (I Thessalonians 1:16). "*Come forth!!!!*" In a spiritual sense, have not the words already been proclaimed? In spiritual death and in sin we all had lain, bound hand and foot with the grave clothes of wickedness and unrighteousness. But He came to the tomb and He cried, "*Come forth!*" "*And you--and I--hath He quickened* (brought to life)," Paul wrote, "*who were dead in trespasses and sins!*" (Ephesians 2:1)

"*Loose him,*" Jesus spoke with authority, "*and let him go!*" Is this not why He came? To provide a spiritual and also a bodily resurrection for us who otherwise would not ever know the meaning of "life." The effect of this miracle was--as it always shall be--twofold (John 11:45-53).

▪ There are those who see the touch of God upon another and believe (John 11:45).

- There are those provoked by it. There is something they call "*our place*" (John 11:48) which they feel they will lose if they do not do something to discredit this miracle and prevent it from happening again. In the words of Jesus' parable, the laborer has said, "*Let us kill Him and secure the inheritance*" (Matthew 21:38).

"*From this day forth, they took counsel together,*" John reported "*to the end that they might put Him to death*" (John 11:53). A permanent conspiracy was at last organized against the life of Jesus. "*Jesus, therefore, abode no more openly among the Jews,*" John observed, "*but He departed thence and went into the country near to the wilderness into a city called Ephraim; and He remained there with His disciples*" (John 11:54).

Ephraim to Golgotha

This became Jesus' final journey, from Ephraim to Golgotha. It must be evident to anyone who reads the account that the Gospel story is a record of the powerful demonstration of the Love of God extended from the cradle in Bethlehem to the cross on Golgotha. The plan for our salvation was drawn up in the ages past by our Lord to encompass, not just those final acts of forgiveness but, the entire span of our Savior's sojourn among us. One can clearly see this. As the earthly life of the Savior comes to its climactic conclusion, so does the fury of the opposing darkness. Whatever devilish plans may have been held in reserve over the 30 or so years Jesus was among us, have inevitably and predictably, on the eve of His death, burst forth in all its rage. The Jewish leadership of the day only knew that whatever this Jesus intended to do--and whatever that plan was could not be known to them--must be prevented.

There is nothing private anymore about this conflict. In a sense, as Jesus approached Golgotha, He invited more and more people to involve themselves in some way in the confrontation. What was once a very private conversation on some forsaken hillside with His twelve discussing His sufferings and death, had become a sermon "shouted from the housetops." Mrs. C. H. Morris in her song "The Conflict of the Ages" understood.

Lo the conflict of the ages is upon us today,
And the armies are assembling
all in battle array;
Are you numbered with the faithful,

The Crusade For the Souls of Men/125

one of God's loyal few

Who have sworn Him full allegiance?

Can He count upon you?

Have your eyes caught the vision?

Have your hearts felt the thrill?

To the call of the Master do you answer, "I will?"

For the conflict of the ages,

told by prophets and by sages,

In its fury is upon us, is upon us today.

It was, then, not without reason that Jesus upon leaving Ephraim for this last journey to Jerusalem publicized His coming not only to Galileans but to Samaritans (Luke 17:11) and Pereans (Mark 10:1; Matthew 19:1) as well. Many were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover and Jesus kept it no secret this time that He was joining them. Such a group would prove adequate protection for the Savior from His "would-be" assassins until He chose to isolate Himself and give them opportunity to take Him.

Jericho

Making His way to Jerusalem, He spoke more plainly about His suffering (Luke 17:25) and the need for continual prayer (Luke 18:1). He spoke more openly about His coming Kingdom and the removing of all earthly thrones (Luke 17:20 - 37). As Handel put it to music "*The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our God and He shall reign forever and ever* " In a--kind of--synopsis, He gave His disciples a glimpse beyond His death and of future events surrounding His second coming and the judgment of the world. It was simply too much for them at the time to comprehend. Even a review which they would request a few days hence (Matthew 24:3) would reveal only their intense desire to know. But as with us, much of this dialogue which A. T. Robertson called His "*Great Eschatological Discourse*" remains a mystery. Jesus had no need to intellectually convince them of the importance of His death and resurrection. But if they--and we--could be sensitive enough to the feelings of God to see that it matters to Him what happens to this world, Jesus' preaching will not have been in vain.

These are the cries of Divine Love. What we have made into theological discourses was for Jesus for all time and eternity the central and most important issues of life. He upheld the sanctity of marriage in answer to an inquiry by the Pharisees (Mark 10:9)--and how can we, then, under any circumstance justify any other conclusion on the subject? He embraced young children with a degree of tenderness that should have at once revealed to the world--if they had only eyes to see--who He really was (Mark

10:13 - 16). He addressed the untouchable subject of the grip of money on the soul (Mark 10:17 - 31) not just to the ruler spoken of in the narrative but to every young man and woman. Hopefully, there are those who are not so bound by the values of their society--values that are over-priced, for they cannot buy one moment in eternity--that they too walk away in utter despair (Mark 10:22).

Everything did not have to make immediate sense to be believable. It was enough to know that it was Jesus who said it. Nonetheless, as they walked along, His talk of death was unsettling. Those periods when He desired to be alone with His thoughts were unusual and frightening (Mark 10:32).

"... And they came to Jericho " (Mark 10:46)

Archeologists tell us that there was an Old and New Jericho, and we are given to understand that somewhere between the two, blind Bartimaeus sat crying "Son of David, have mercy on me." Somewhere between the old and the new in more than one way do we find the merciful Son of David; for, in eight or nine days, the Old covenant will be fulfilled and the New will be in affect. Bartimaeus--physically blind, but spiritually enlightened is caught in between heralding Jesus as the Messiah, the rightful heir to the throne of David!! According to Mark (10:46) and Luke (18:35) he began crying for the "*Son of David*" when Jesus *entered* Jericho, but according to Matthew (20:29) he and at least one colleague were not attended to until Jesus *left* the city. How long did the Savior let them continue calling "Messiah ... Messiah ... Messiah!!!" before He gave them sight?

Bethany

The crowd about Jesus was once again large enough to prevent a Zacchaeus from getting near (Luke 19:1-28). The solution to the tax-collector's dilemma was simple. Jesus would give him the chance to express his enthusiasm in the privacy of his own home. Jesus would spend the next few hours at Zacchaeus' house much to the disapproval of the Judeans in his company. His intentions were to check the wild enthusiasm of the multitude (Luke 19:11). He was nigh Jerusalem, within twenty miles of the city limits, and all Israel seemed represented in this crowd of followers that was ready now to crown Him king. But they must be given to understand that the Kingdom of God will not "*immediately appear.*" (Luke 19:11)

It was "*Six days before Passover*" Jesus was going to Bethany and the home of His beloved friend, Lazarus (John 12:1, 10). "Six days" according to the generally accepted reckoning would interpret this as the Saturday before Jesus' death. The following Friday at 9 A.M., He would be nailed to the Cross.

On which day did Jesus die? A rather lengthy discourse could be written on the subject since so much depends upon interpretation. Consider also the fact that the Jewish day always begins six (6) hours earlier than "ours" which begins at "midnight." We can, therefore, accept the proposed schedule of events given by A. T. Robertson not because it is the view we personally endorse, but because it is more generally accepted and therefore less confusing ... and also since this subject is--in all honesty--relatively unimportant. What is important is what was happening.

"*On the next day,*" John continued (John 12:12, 13) or Sunday, late afternoon (Mark 11:11) "*much people took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him* " There was just two (2) miles between Bethany, where Jesus spent the night, and Jerusalem. While He walked toward Jerusalem with crowds already in attendance, others were coming from Jerusalem to welcome Him. It is easy to believe that the disciples initiated what happened next. Before Jesus could be seated upon the colt of a jackass (in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9) some of His "twelve" made for Him a saddle from their outer cloaks (Mark 11:7). The others not to be outdone--spread theirs in the way before Him (Mark 11:8). It was then the crowd broke rank and running in all directions to the right and left went into the nearby Mount of Olives and cut or broke branches from the trees--some even contented themselves with handfuls of the long grass that grew beside the way (this is the general meaning of Mark's word "branches") ... anything they could find to place in His path!

Jerusalem

The delegation from Jerusalem came prepared. They came with palm branches which were part of a victory march recalling in ritual the defeat of their enemies. (Leviticus 23:40). How appropriate for them to envision ultimate victory in the person and ministry of the Savior. "*Hosanna*," they cried. "*Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the Name of the Lord!!*" (John 12:13) "*Hosanna*" means most literally "*Save us, we pray!!*" They meant, Save us from the Romans! Deliver us from our political enemies and give us a Kingdom ... and let the Son of David be our king! The crowd that came with Him joined in (Matthew 21:9) "*Hosanna to the Son of David ... Hosanna in the highest!!!*" The crowds rallied to His side--though not to His cause--with almost uncontrollable enthusiasm. No one remained unaffected or indifferent to His coming.

"*All Jerusalem was moved ...*," Matthew recalled (Matthew 21:10) The Pharisees were embittered (John 12:19). The "twelve" were totally confused (John 12:16) and the Sadducees and chief priest, which represented political as well as religious leadership were alarmed and indignant (Matthew 21:15).

They felt their intense anger was justified, and whatever action they took to express their rage against Jesus was now clearly a right action and sanctioned--even called for--by every interpretation of Holy Scripture. "*Put Jesus to death*," they reasoned, "*and we will do ourselves and God a favor!*" They called for an immediate response from the Savior. "*Do you hear the crowd?*" They yelled out to Jesus,

demanding--it must be believed--in their tone of voice for Jesus to quiet the crowd!!

"*Have you never read,*" Jesus responded-- perhaps with excitement written on a smile, "*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise!!*" (Matthew 21:16) Lest one might think that Jesus was Himself rejoicing, Luke added (Luke 19:39 - 42) that after Jesus refused the admonition of the Pharisees to rebuke His disciples, reasoning that the stones would cry out if the people did not, He looked in the direction of the city proper ... "and wept over it."

- He wept because they knew not "the time of their visitation" (Luke 19: 44). They did not really understand the importance of His coming.

- He wept because they would soon be besieged with enemies (Luke 19:43). This was a prophecy fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Romans leveled the city and temple walls.

- He wept because true security and peace--politically and in every other way--was His to give--but they did not want Him, nor His gifts (Luke 19:42).

- He wept because the religion they so carefully defended against Him would be gone forever with the coming destruction of the Temple (Luke 19:44).

"*And He left them, Matthew concluded, and went out of the city into Bethany and He lodged there*" (Matthew 21:17).

MONDAY

It was Monday morning and ahead lay the most critical week in History. In Jesus' own words, "*The hour is come ... now is my soul troubled.*" (John 12:23, 27) It may be impossible for us with our finite minds and finite hearts to grasp the significance of this moment. Dorothy Sayers in her book, "*Man Born to be King,*" summed it up as best any of us could: "*From the beginning of time until now, this is the only thing that has ever really happened.*" Referring to the Cross in particular, she continued, "*When you understand this you will understand all prophecies and all history.*"

Although yesterday's march into Jerusalem was, in a display of heightened activity, climactic of all that had gone before, this morning's schedule would make it appear almost commonplace. Not that yesterday was not important. But it was only a step to a higher and more intense level of involvement in the plan of God. Each act of kindness and every teaching by the Master had become in turn more and more critical. For the next four days, Jesus would teach in the Temple each day and hide Himself away somewhere nearby in Bethany or the Mount of Olives each night (John 12:36). For the next four days, the crowds assembling for the Passover would be held on the precipice of indecision. They had not yet committed themselves to any course regarding Him.

Their religious leaders were in suspense for a different reason. The opportunity afforded them by Jesus' presence at Jerusalem could soon pass forever. "NOW is the time to move," they counseled, "... but how??" (Luke 19:48) "*The people hold Him in great respect!!*"

The answer was the people. They must be turned against Him, if the Sanhedrin would succeed in silencing the Great Teacher. The people! Yes! To use a current expression: The ball was in their court. The decision to accept or reject the Savior was theirs to make. It was to the

people Jesus also had to come. The time had arrived to "*show Himself to the world.*" (John 7:9) -- not to appeal for support nor defend His teachings but to share with them, as He had His disciples, the details of His mission (John 12:31- 36). He desired to give them another opportunity to "*walk in the light*" (John 12:35) while they could. Even the Father from Heaven echoed the same in thunderous confirmation. (John 12:28-- "*Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified My name and will glorify it again!!*")

Jehovah spoke out!! "*Not for my sake,*" Jesus affirmed, "*but for yours.*" (John 12:30) As the thunder once echoed off the Mount when the Old Covenant was signed, so it resounded at the signing of the New. But Isaiah was right (John 12:38- 41). Hard hearted people are deaf to the Truth. The report goes unheeded. Even some who dared believe were hesitant to express that belief publicly (John 12:42). To be "put out" of the Synagogue was for them more immediately painful than the thought of being "put out" of God's heaven (Matthew 10:32, 33). Israel was, indeed, a fig tree with leaves only. And whereas, some men identify a tree by its leaf, Jesus identified it by its fruit (Mark 11:12-14; Matthew 12: 33).

Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus went directly to the Temple. Once again, the Sacred Zone needed to be swept clean (Mark 11:15-17). This cleansing differed in some respects from that at the commencement of our Lord's ministry. Now the money changers had to be forcibly driven from the Temple Court, for, the Master's earlier admonition unheeded, they had completed turning the prayer chamber, where even Gentiles could come to approach God, into a den for thieves. It is not difficult to see why Jesus no longer referred to the Temple as "My Father's House." The avarice of its keepers had defiled it to the point where it could no longer be identified as the "House of God." At the same time, in the tradition of a Phinehas (Numbers 25:11) or an Elijah (I Kings 19:10) the Savior defended the honor of God for Whom the Temple was erected and to Whom it had been dedicated. More than

this, the time had come to make clear the issues. A cursed fig tree only served to illustrate the spiritual fruitlessness of His own generation (Mark 11:12- 14). The priests had exchanged godliness for greed. The Temple, except perhaps in the memory of a few, no longer represented the place where men meet God, the House of Prayer, a Court of Repentance. In another sense, even before Titus, the Roman Emperor in 70 A.D. would dismantle its great stones, its own people had dismantled the great principles for which it stood. Its destruction forty years hence would, in a way, confirm this.

And what about the Greeks seeking as they did an audience with the Master? (John 12:20) Did their interest in some way have anything to do with God's timing? While Israel was getting prepared to crucify Him, was the rest of the world opening up to receive Him??

Time ... and you and I ... will tell.

TUESDAY

It appears from the account that Tuesday was an involved day for our Lord. The day begins in Mark 11:20 and continues thru Mark 14:1. Some scholars place the supper held in Simon's home (Mark 14:3-9) on Tuesday evening. This being the case, Wednesday's activities were not recorded at all and Mark 14:12 begins Thursday.

Tuesday was indeed a day of controversy for the Savior. A day of questioning (Mark 11:28) and counter-questioning (Mark 11:29). Answering a question with a question is always -- though an indirect, yet -- a wise approach to things. Interesting too is the fact that these were public debates (Mark 11:32) and our Lord's wisdom could not be challenged without embarrassing results for His opponents. But this was a lesson learned by them only after repeated attempts at discrediting Jesus in the company of His followers. First the Sanhedrin mobilized their verbal artillery against Him (Mark 11:27). But they found themselves in speedy retreat against a barrage of His parables skillfully aimed at them (Mark 12:12). Then came a contingent of Pharisees and Herodians (Mark 12:13) armed with their own brand of questions ingeniously designed--no doubt, the best efforts of the most cunning minds--to trap Jesus in His responses. For most players of the deadly game of "the war of words" it would have been "check-mate" but not for Jesus. God's wisdom will always confound the most "worldly" wise (I Corinthians 1:19). Then came the Sadducees (Mark 12:18- 27), followed by the Scribes (Mark 12:28). Wave after wave of the most learned minds in Israel that were allied against Him assaulted His teachings. Their questions were explosive matters taken from an arsenal of religious, political and social issues. Like unstable compounds, these needed only to be brought out from the controlled environment of the scholar's chambers into the air of public opinion to explode and destroy the career of anyone who happened to be "too

close." It was a deadly game to play and the religious leaders were losing. Jesus had them in retreat. "*And no man after that durst ask Him any question,*" Mark recalled (Mark 11:34).

When your enemy is in retreat, pursue him! It is the privilege of the victor to take the spoils (Isaiah 53:12) and to march in triumph (Colossians 2:15). It is his opportunity to take prisoners. And with the Savior, in particular, it was His prophetic right to see His enemies humbled at His feet (Mark 12:36) calling Him "Lord" (Philippians 2:11). And so He had one question to ask them (Mark 12:35-37). "*The Messiah to come, is David's son and He is also David's Lord. How can this be?*" To us the question is easily answered. To a Scribe, however, in Jesus' day, it was profoundly complex. Fathers, not sons, were Masters and Lords. We can develop a sensitivity to their problem by observing the same logical contradiction in the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6. How is it that the Son of God, the child that was to be born, according to the prophecy, was also called "the everlasting Father."??? Was Jesus' question rhetorical? Had they been able to answer it, His messiahship would have suddenly been clear to them.

" ... *And the common people heard Him gladly*" (Mark 12: 37). To see the enemies of the Savior--at least for the present moment--scattering and discomfited brought a sense of pleasure to the crowds. Perhaps it is true that the only time the "sword of the Spirit" really cuts is when we have taken up arms against it. Oh, to be "common people" not so prejudiced and defensive of personal theologies that the words of our Lord can no longer excite us and make our hearts glad. Oh, yes. What about Isaiah 9:6? How is it that the Son of God is also to be known as the "Everlasting Father"? "*The Son is the Father,*" H.D.M. Spence begins to comment on this passage, "*Christ sustained this view: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.'* No man has truly seen Christ who has not found in Him the Father, and learned from Him the fatherhood of God."

With His antagonists silenced and the "common"

people listening, Jesus began to uncover the fallacies and contradictions in what resembled on the part of the Pharisees a pious adherence to Truth. Jesus' words were pointed and cutting. They don't love God, they love to go about looking priestly and being called by titles. They love being treated special as dignitaries or honored guests (Mark 12:38, 39). "Devout" does not describe them. "Devour" does (Mark 12:40). "Prayer" with them is a pretense." And if you have noticed, they never practice what they preach (Matthew 23:4). "*You hypocrites!!!*" Jesus aimed His remarks directly at them (Matthew 23:14, 15). "*You, blind fools!!!*" (Matthew 23:17, 19) "*You murderous liars!!!*" (Matthew 23:30, 31). [The Savior is poking the hornet's nest.]

"You generation of vipers, snakes!! How subtle and how crafty you are, convincing the people somehow that you have dedicated your lives to God and His Law ... How shall you escape the damnation of Hell!!!" (Matthew 23:33)

Jesus, finishing these comments, made His way through one of the gates leading into the Court of the Women and sat down beside one of the thirteen chests that lined the wall of the Court. The chests were for the convenience of those devout individuals who gave toward the various accounts needed to maintain the Temple. Thus, it took on the title "The Treasury" (Mark 12:41). Jesus observed a widow putting in her last two mites (Luke 21:1-4). The fact that it was all she had, made the actual amount unimportant, but for those who would inquire, a mite is a brass (copper) coin we would compare with a "tenth of a penny." To be more precise: Take the Roman denarius which some say was worth about 17 cents and according to Matthew (20:10) was a fair day's wage. Divide this by 128 to determine the value of the mite. Her offering, in other words, represented roughly ten minutes worth of wage for a field laborer or two mils in our currency. We must leave it to the preachers to expound on the value of her contribution to Christendom, but we can immediately notice the contrast between this widow, truly dedicated to the Lord's work, and the religious leaders. We have to believe that this contrast helped make the point regarding

Pharisaic hypocrisy even more vivid in the minds and hearts of Jesus' disciples. There also had to be something spiritually refreshing to Jesus while He observed this widow's wholehearted dedication to the work of God. To that, the Savior could personally relate.

In any event, it was Jesus' last act in the Temple--or so we must assume since the record does not disclose Wednesday's schedule. Jesus left the Temple to be alone with His disciples, to spend with them some of the few remaining hours before He would say His farewells.

THURSDAY

It is no longer a question of days but rather of hours to Our Lord's Crucifixion. It was Thursday, the first day of unleavened bread (Mark 14:12), the day the Paschal lamb was slain. It was the day before Passover. It was after six in the evening, the 14th of Nisan on the Jewish calendar (Exodus 12:6). By three o'clock tomorrow afternoon--less than 24 hours away--God's Paschal Lamb, too, would be slain. It was just as Paul later affirmed. (1 Corinthians 5: 7) "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*" At the very hour the lambs were being offered up to God in the Court of the Priests, God's "Lamb" was being offered up on Golgotha's Hill.

When Passover began, the night of the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, God declared to Israel, that while the firstborn of every Egyptian should die, for His people there would be a substitute. They would be redeemed by the blood of a lamb. It would die that they could live. It is unfortunate--and in a sense inexplicable that the significance of that single event has not become clear to everyone who has even heard of the Savior's death. He died that we could live. His crucifixion marks the day of our spiritual exodus from the bondage of sin. And yet, sad to say, as any dictionary of theology will tell, the Feast days of Passover have over the years developed many additional features. In some minds, Passover is merely a harvest festival--a kind of "Thanksgiving Day." Lord, forgive us!!

Jesus had already been anointed for burial two days earlier, as had been pointed out, at the home of Simon, the leper, in Bethany (Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:2- 8). As John testified, it was their dear friend, Mary, Lazarus' sister, who took one pound of pure nard--one of the most expensive perfumes (and undiluted at that)--Godet adds "*an enormous quantity for a perfume of this price*"--and after anointing Jesus' head (Mark 14:3) [Psalms 23:5 must come to mind], she bathed His feet (John 12:3) with the liquid. "Head and

foot" in a way shows a desire to let the fragrance embrace His entire being.

"*What is she doing!!!*" Judas Iscariot was enraged. "*For a long time,*" Godet remarks, "*there had been in his heart a gloomy discontent.*" (John 6:70). "*Three HUNDRED denarii!! !*" It would take a field laborer working nearly a whole year to raise that kind of money!! And she spills it out in a meaningless and wasteful display of emotionalism!!!

"*Let her alone*", Jesus interrupted. "*Judas,*"--if we may interpret John 12:7--"*she has made this day the day of My funeral rights of which thou wilt soon give the signal.*"

Judas had enough! He got up and left to consult with the religious leaders on a matter that now consumed him ... to betray Jesus. But what his exact motives were for meeting after supper with the chief priests (Mark 14:10, 11), we cannot be sure. Is it only coincidental that this betrayal had a price attached to it?? After all, he "*had the bag*" John noted, that is, he was the group's treasurer. More than that "*he was a thief*" John added (John 12:6). How much of the general fund he may have pilfered we cannot say, but one thing was sure: His interest in "mammon" was evident. He agreed, Matthew recalled (Matthew 26:15), to turn Jesus over to the authorities for 30 pieces of silver. Did he not know the prophecy?? (Zechariah 11:12) Did he not realize that the very impulses of his soul were being controlled by a power beyond himself?? (John 13:2) Does anybody?? Once the passion of lust or rage or greed grabs them, does anyone know what is really happening and what the end will be!? Judas Iscariot's epitaph read, "*he had obtained part of this ministry*" (Acts 1: 17). He was an apostle!! Peter--at least--believed so (Acts 1:20). But temptation becoming stronger and stronger through his yielding to it, eventually burdened him with more guilt than he could carry. His untimely suicide--certainly, in no way part of the plan of God--cries out a grim warning to anyone else who might greedily seek after the "wages" of sin (Romans 6:23). Judas was the--or should we say a--"*son of perdition*" and such a title designates eventual spiritual

destruction (John 17:12 and see also II Thessalonians 2:3). However--if we may interject a theological note--it was God's foreknowledge that saw this, *not* His Will that required it. At least so this author believes. It is useless to try to analyze the hearts of men with our theological magnifying glasses. We know so little about people and less about God. We can, however, cherish our own ministries and not walk beside Jesus as Judas did with discontent. We can cry out for the Grace of God to take hold of our beings and tie us ever closer and tighter to the Heart of God.

It was late Thursday afternoon. The first day of unleavened bread (Mark 14:12) began six o'clock that evening. Jesus would have to partake of the Passover dinner early in the day since later that day, in the foreknowledge of God, the Savior would be involved in the last and most critical details of redemption's plan from the Cross. Continue to bear in mind that the Jewish day began at 6 each evening. And so by "early" we mean 6 p.m. At 3 p.m. Friday--which is still the same Jewish day--Jesus would die.

Peter and John (Luke 22:8) were directed to enter the Holy City and identify a certain man carrying an earthen pitcher filled with water--no doubt from the Pool of Siloam. "*The man would act as an unconscious guide,*" Swete commented, "*through the network of narrow and unfamiliar streets to the appointed place.*"

They would be led to the home of a friend who would provide them an upper chamber where they should prepare for that final meal with the Savior. We cannot be sure, but, perhaps, this personal friend even provided the meal itself, and the only details that Peter and John had to tend to were the incidentals of a few purchases or of moving a few pieces of furniture in place or lining up the silverware. In any case, only God could have so orchestrated such a plan. To somehow focus in on one lonely man quietly moving through crowded thoroughfares in a city overflowing with excitement--and that man to be the right man--required Divine guidance. Surely, the steps

of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord! It is generally assumed, however, that Peter and John--even if the Paschal lamb were already provided--had to roast it. They needed to purchase the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs ... and of course, the wine.

It was getting late (Mark 14:17) when they finally reclined at supper. Jesus may have intentionally waited til dark to make His way through Jerusalem's streets to the upper room. Prudence may have required it since He would have been easily identified in the sunlight. To be able to envision the setting, picture "*the guests*," to quote Swete,

"lay(ing) on their left side with their feet resting on the ground, and the couches seem to have been grouped in sets of two or three, when these were placed together, the central position was that of greatest dignity. It appears (John 13:23) that the Lord reclined between Peter and John."

There was much to be done that evening before leaving for the quietness of the Garden of Gethsemane. There was much to do and much to say. They would be there until midnight or after, eating the Passover while discussing the particular details of Jesus' betrayal--which still made little to no sense to them (Mark 14:17- 21). Gloom settled over them (Mark 14:19). They looked upon one another with perplexity and perhaps suspicion (John 13:22). They began one by one to deny any suspicion of guilt. Each in turn would die for Him if necessary (Mark 14:31). So they affirmed.

This would be the Savior's final meal with them before His death. It has been known as "The Last Supper" for obvious reasons, but in another sense, it was the first. Perhaps, we could call it the first "love feast." (Jude 12) While commemorating Passover, Jesus initiated what we have since named the "Eucharist" (a word signifying 'gratitude'). With grateful hearts we "*remember our Lord's death*," Paul testified, "*til He come*." (I Corinthians 11:26). It was a ceremony--to be sure--in which the rituals of Passover with all proper respect were celebrated. At the same time, our Lord instituted the ordinance or sacrament of Holy Communion. The exact details of this ceremony, however, are a mystery. Christians--in all honesty--have

developed differing forms for the Communion Service based largely on religious preference. The only thing for sure is what Paul outlined in I Corinthians 11:23-26. [And what about the wine?? Was it really grape juice?? No one knows for sure.] Did Jesus somehow involve the "Haggadah" or Passover Story (Exodus 24:4-8) in His own passion and suffering?? The "Hallel" (Psalms 112-118) were traditionally sung at this time. Was that the "hymn" Mark mentioned?? (Mark 14:26)

With great exactness, religious rituals have been observed throughout the Christian era. They have been celebrated with such passionate interest that the changing of the smallest detail has often given grounds for division. At the moment, however, another divisive issue was needing to be addressed. The twelve could not dismiss the exciting thought that God's Kingdom was near and perhaps they would have "key" positions in that new administration (Luke 22:14-16 and 24-30). Quietly, perhaps unnoticed at first, for they were in the middle of a rather heated though quite meaningless--debate over greatness, Jesus girded Himself with the servant's towel and slipping to His knees, proceeded to wash each disciple's feet. Slowly He made His way from couch to couch until He had circled the little group. (John 13:1-17) It was a true lesson in Greatness. "*He that is greatest among you,*" Jesus reminded all of us, "*let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve.*" (Luke 22: 26)

This was not the only message that evening that would be faithfully recorded for future generations of believers who--like the Twelve--need to have "loose" issues somehow tied to a meaningful conclusion to all that was happening. Jesus would be leaving them in a few hours, and although He would return in three days, things would no longer be the same. "*Henceforth*" Paul concurred, "*know we Him no more (after the flesh)*" (II Corinthians 5:16). Jesus' final words that evening in the upper room as recorded by John (chapter 14-17) are just the thing all of Christendom needs to hear while they await His return. It was a farewell filled with hope and comfort. It was God's

answer to the aching hearts of a small band of disillusioned disciples that needed something--as we say--to hold on to. Nothing could be more meaningful than the Savior's closing prayer (John 17) before leaving for the Garden. It was after midnight. According to our reckoning, Friday had come. Was the sky overcast that night?? Or were the stars "out" shining as they did the night of His birth??

No one seemed to notice. In fact, there is nothing else here to see but Jesus. In the plan of God, the Garden experience for our Savior had to be most critical. It was here that the sheep scattered (Mark 14:50). It was here that He was betrayed for 30 coins and a kiss (Mark 14:44). It was here, He was experiencing feelings never before experienced (at least not so revealed in the account). He was "*sore amazed*" and "*very heavy* [hearted]" Mark added (Mark 14: 33). "*Sore amazed*" means "frightened." "*Very heavy*", as we understand the word, relates to the emotional stress (distress and confusion) that followed. Never before--to repeat for emphasis--did Jesus contend with such feelings pulsating violently through His being. Mark 14:34 may be understood to conclude that in this state of overwhelming emotional, spiritual, and mental pain, Jesus was already near death. It was here enveloped in such pain (Mark 14:34) that He made the decision to go to Calvary.

FRIDAY

"He was taken from judgment," Isaiah prophesied some seven hundred years earlier (Isaiah 58:8). The Temple guard under orders by the High Priest came to the Garden, guided by Judas Iscariot (John 18:2), and *"laid hands on Him and took Him."* (Mark 14:46) What the religious leaders were planning was even by Roman standards unconscionable. (Luke 23: 14) Then again, religious zeal running wild serves no code of law. (Mark 15:10) The High Priests, in one violent display of envy and rage, tore themselves free from any subscription, any code of ethics, or any form of justice that simple human honesty and integrity would demand, and in the course of one unforgettably cold and dark night (Luke 22:53) condemned Jesus and all that He stood for ... to death. They condemned truth and perfection. They condemned a purity which they could not understand (John 1:5). Anything that threatened the security of their position in Israel--anything good that by its very nature would inevitably bring about the fall of their corrupt empire--must be condemned.

Jesus was led first to the home of Annas, the former High Priest, where He was questioned regarding His disciples and doctrine (John 18:13).

"Why do you ask Me?" know what I believe." The Savior responded with a question, *"Ask the people, they know..."* (John 18:21) His quiescence was unnerving. They, then, brought Him in their frustration to Caiaphas. (John 18:24) The High Priest sat in Council with other priests and elders hoping to build their case quickly against Him. (Mark 14:53-65) His silence, however, gave them no support. (Matthew 26:63) They sought for witnesses, but there were none (Mark 14:55). It was finally clear that to put the Savior to death--and that would have to be decided by the Roman Court (John 18:36)--they would need certain adherents to their cause that would be willing to perjure themselves. Such "friends" were available (Mark 14:56),

but one thing about lies, it is impossible to fit them together. They are pieces to different puzzles. And not even the wit or ingenuity of the most scholarly logician can change that. "*But their witness agreed not together,*" Mark noted.

It takes little thought to imagine how some of the accusations read. They accused Him of planning to destroy the Temple (Mark 14:58). Many of Jesus' beliefs and doctrines were to their way of thinking very dangerous (Luke 23:5). No doubt, these issues were raised. The title "Son of God" was the ultimate insult (Luke 22:70), and when Jesus, at last, admitted to it, they saw in that a causative action to put Him to death (John 19:7).

To the Romans, however, who cared nothing for Jewish creeds, the charge would have to read differently---of course. They would pronounce Him guilty of insurrection against the Roman Government (Luke 23:1, 2; John 19:12)---a most effective strategy. It is interesting how little madness and hatred follow principle. History will bear out that Jewry took offense against the Romans for the least of their freedoms being denied. And through men like Barabbas (Mark 15:7)--who would soon be once again roaming the hills--they plotted their liberty. At this moment--strangely enough--however, they were friends of Caesar. They would accuse Jesus of wanting to overthrow Caesar's rule--a charge that even to Pilate, viewing Jesus in His exhausted and burdened condition, seemed incredulous (John 18:4). But Pilate, nonetheless, by this accusation and the crowd's reaction would be intimidated to move against the Savior. (We are ahead of ourselves in the Narrative, for these plans are yet on the Council's table with Jesus before them ready to make a statement.)

"*I am the Son of God,*" Jesus plainly confessed, "*And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven!*" (Mark 14:61-62)

"*Blasphemy!!!*" Caiaphas cried, tearing his garment. "*He calls himself Messiah!!!*"

"And they began," Mark said, "to spit in His face and to punch and slap Him, mockingly--as with childish fun--yelling, "Prophecy!! Tell us, does God inspire you now to know, who is it that strikes you this time???? Surely you must know, if you are the Messiah!!!"

In reality, it was they who blasphemed! (Luke 22:65) It is probably best we do not know all that was said that night. Their words had to cut the Savior more deeply than the thorns or spear.

And then came the dawn (Matthew 27:1). All that night, the inquisition smote with fist and tongue against divine innocence, waiting for the morning, waiting for Pilate to rise from sleep so that they could get on with the formality of a trial as Roman law required for the death penalty. Caiaphas and the other religious leaders refused to enter the Hall of judgment lest they defile themselves, so, Pilate that morning sat outside (John 18:28, 29). To him they raised the issue of Jesus' claimed Messiahship--however--in political terms that required of Pilate a response.

"*Art thou King of the Jews?*" Pilate asked Jesus. His question to the Savior was to him political not religious. Jesus knew this.

"*Do you believe that I am?*" Jesus answered.

"*Am I a Jew?*" Pilate responded. "It is no real concern of mine," he was saying. (The religious aspirations of one lone man whose own nation has put him on trial bore no threat to the Roman government (John 18:34, 35).

"*My kingdom is not of this world*" Jesus continued.

"*Thou art a king, then.*" Pilate interrupted.

"*Do you believe I am?*" Jesus asked in turn, "*I am here simply to bear witness to the Truth of God.*"

"*What is Truth?*" Pilate asked, assured by now that Jesus was no threat to his security. This Jesus is only a prophet of sorts--Pilate must have mused--that likes to philosophize about matters that cannot be resolved. Turning to the Jews, Pilate gave the verdict. "*I find in Him no fault at all.* (John 18:38) "*But since He is Galilean,*" Pilate

continued, "*He belongs under Herod's jurisdiction.*" (Luke 23:6-12) And so Jesus was brought before the Tetrarch.

Herod's involvement appeared almost incidental. He was not interested directly in Jesus' guilt or innocence. All he wanted was to see a miracle or two. When Jesus did not oblige, he and his men "*set the Savior at naught*" Luke related (Luke 23:11). They treated Him as insignificant and unimportant. Jesus stood before them simply for their enjoyment. They played "the school boy" and began to have a little fun. Arraying Him in a kingly robe, they payed Him mock homage before returning Him to Pilate.

For Pilate, the situation was nearing the point of decision. His attempt to scheme Jesus' release by following the Jewish custom at Passover to set one prisoner free did not work. He hoped the Jews would come to reason and let Jesus go free (John 18:39), but mob reaction has nothing in common with reason. The more Pilate delayed, the more time the religious leaders had to "*move the people*" (Mark 15:11) to put our Lord to death and free Barabbas.

To complicate matters for the Governor, Pilate's wife awakening from a nightmare that somehow involved the Savior, took it as an omen, and pleaded with Pilate to "wash his hands" of the case (Matthew 27:19). But how could he?? He was the Governor. He had to decide to either crucify Jesus or release Him. Mob reaction--as was noted--was a critical concern. The more excited the crowd became, the more excitable they became and the more imperiled Pilate's authority. Godet explains:

This ... term "King of the Jews" with the political coloring which it could not fail to have in the eyes of Tiberius (the Emperor), would infallibly make Pilate appear as an unfaithful administrator, who had attempted to screen from punishment an enemy (Jesus) of the imperial authority; and his trial would be a short matter; this Pilate knew well. It is true that the trial (of Jesus) ... on the part of the Jews, was a renouncing of their great national hope, the very idea of the Messiah, and a making themselves vassals of the empire. Such a victory was a suicide. In this regard also it is easy to understand how, in their plan of battle, they should have reserved this maneuver for the last; it was the stroke of desperation.

Pilate was motivated by fear (John 19:8). Jesus' life

was a small matter to him in consideration of his own career. For conscience sake though, Pilate would let the record state that the Jews were wanting to crucify an innocent man (Matthew 27:24). "*His blood be on us and our children,*" the people cried in frenzy (Matthew 27:25). Luke stated, "*Pilate delivered Jesus to their will.*" (Luke 23:25) Before sentencing, Jesus was brought forth to meet His accusers. It was a formality of the law (John 19:13).

It was about the sixth hour according to John (John 19:14), but the other Gospel writers say that Jesus' punishment which began with the scourging happened after 9 that morning. (Mark 15:15-25). What is not clear in the translations is the general way time was reckoned in that day. The day was divided into 8 watches, 4 during the day and 4 during the night, every three hours. The writers saw no reason to mention hours between or to be more exact when recording events. John, in fact, uses the word "about." So, the 3rd hour of the morning would have been around 9 o'clock to include any time before 10. And the 6th hour would pass for the hours 11 to noon. Mark says that some time after nine in the morning sentence was passed on the Savior and He was scourged, then led away to die. This takes time to happen. John looks from 11 on and records the critical moments while our Lord was on the Cross. John had no time piece and had to trust, at that point, to his blurred vision of the position of the morning sun.

Pilate pronounced our Savior innocent of crime but guilty of death. Jesus was led from the Seat of judgment back into the Palace (Mark 15:16-19). Here, the cohort of 600 Roman soldiers, that accompanied the Governor, having clothed the Savior in purple and placed the crown of thorns on His royal brow, began taking turns to strike Him with a staff--no doubt--mockingly used as a king's scepter. Then, one by one, they spit on Him. [It is meaningful to learn the word used in the original text, for, it depicts the sound: *PTUO*] And bowing low at His feet--in jest--they did obeisance to Him. (If they had only known then what later one of them would confess: "*Truly, this was the Son of God.*" [Matthew 27:54])

Much has been written about the last six hours of Our Savior's earthly sojourn. (Mark 15:24-41) We would add to this only a few brief comments. Throughout this work, we have cared little for dramatizing the record. Our purpose has been from the beginning to help explain and emphasize, wherever we could, those reactions and feelings of our Lord that--in a sense--betrayed an intimate thought or desire that perhaps by the Grace of God, we too might have. However, the Cross of Calvary is a different matter. What Jesus was feeling here was not only beyond description but was a suffering that He alone carried. You see: He went to the Cross so that you and I would not have to. But what He said from the Cross--on the other hand--reveals something profound. In seven simple statements, He showed that His attention, even at the moment of His greatest personal need, was on someone else.

1. He thought first of those who nailed Him there and cried, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" (Luke 23:34)
2. He thought of the repentant thief hanging at His side and reassuringly promised, "*Verily, I say unto you, today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*" (Luke 23:43)
3. He looked at His mother, Mary, who was herself suffering and comfortingly instructed "*Woman, behold thy son (John). Turning then to John, He said, "Behold thy mother."* (John 19:26, 27) In this way, Jesus arranged for His widowed mother to be cared for and comforted in His death. Mary lived with John (tradition tells us) until her own death around 48 A.D.
4. He looked toward heaven and cried "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" (Mark 15:34) But His cry was not a lament--much less, a complaint. More than it being a fulfillment of Psalm 22:1, it has declared to the Christian world that through the poverty of His being forsaken (II Corinthians 8:9) we might have the riches of God's

continuing presence.

5. It was nearing the time. The plan of redemption was soon to be complete. Jesus perhaps reviewing the matter in His own heart, thought of Psalm 22 again--verse 15---and cried out in response to that prophecy "*I thirst.*" (John 19:28)

The sixth saying He spoke to all. The seventh to His Father, alone....

Golgotha

Our Lord took the effort to declare His interest in the fulfillment of the simplest of truth concerning Himself. He could have thirsted in silence. But then Psalm 69: 21 would not have been fulfilled. ("*They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*") Jesus was emphatically crying out what He had long before determined in His heart: Prophecy must and shall be fulfilled ... the Will of the Father be done!!

Jesus could now see the victory. (Colossians 2:15) It was all fulfilled. It was done ... by the Grace of God ... by the Power of omnipotent love ... it was finally done!

"IT IS FINISHED!!!"

Jesus mustered the last bit of strength to speak (John 19:30). This is perfect completion.

- The plan of redemption was **TOTALLY** done. Nothing was left out that was needed to provide for our salvation.
- The plan of redemption was **FINALLY** done. No longer do we wait. No longer need God's Habakkuk's cry out "How long???"
- The plan of redemption was **PERMANENTLY** done. "*There remains now no more sacrifice for sin.*" (Hebrews 10:26)

"IT IS FINISHED!"

"*Father, into Thy hands, I commend My Spirit.*" (Luke 23:46) "*And having said thus,*" Luke concluded, "*He gave up the Ghost.*" (Luke 23:46) His lifeless form was then lovingly laid to rest in a borrowed tomb ... but the story has

not ended.

Sunday morning, His followers found the tomb where they laid Him ... empty. His Resurrection has become a matter of historical significance. Not only has it been documented, but it proves beyond question that the power of God to raise the dead to die no more is very real. If only now the meaning of all of this could be impressed upon the human heart.

"Like as Christ was raised from the dead," Paul wrote, *"even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4)

Jesus is risen! And His ministry toward us is only begun! Hopefully, these three years of His earthly ministry will be just the beginning of what shall show itself to be an even greater work within us.

It is here in us that the Gospel Story is continued.

Supplemental

The Day of Jesus' Death

On what day did Jesus die? For many, the question is not a mere point of interest or curiosity, but "contending for the Faith" they attack it with a ravenous appetite to know. What Christians do not know is that to the intensity we are eager to know--once our minds have been satisfied--to that degree we defend that "bit of knowledge." Let us be sure it is the Truth we defend and the enemy of Christ we fight. It seems to me, with regard to the question: On what day did Jesus die? The believer may never be clearly satisfied and the only war our misdirected zeal would engage in would be a civil conflict with other believers.

Why must we know what is evidently impossible with our present sources of information to find out? Curiosity can be a driving passion in the wrong heart. May God help us to be content to know what in Scripture He has given us to know, and though we are limited by intellectual ignorance, may we be blessed with the Spiritual knowledge that we are to love one another as Christ loved. That being said:

There are two Scripturally based answers to this question. and acceptable. Both views can excite the believer to look chronology into the Divine Truths presented to all of us. Both are scholarly beyond the mere

chronology. It is important, first, to understand the points of relevance regarding the Jewish Passover.

This particular feast day began with the eating of the Passover lamb. Since days were reckoned from sunset to sunset (6:00 P.M.) this meal was eaten at 6:00 P.M.-- actually six hours BEFORE our corresponding day would begin. Thus: if Passover was Saturday, for the Jews it would begin on OUR Friday evening at 6:00 p.m. and it would commence with the eating of the Paschal lamb.

Since Saturday is their Sabbath, on the week Passover came, two Holy days were observed, i.e., Passover and Sabbath. The Passover was called a "High-Sabbath." When Passover fell on Saturday in a given year BOTH were observed together. We might call that a "Double-Sabbath."

The day BEFORE Passover was called the First day of unleavened bread or the day of Preparation when the Paschal lamb was slain and prepared--roasted--to be eaten at 6:00 P.M. when Passover started. (What may be a bit confusing is that the Jews also referred to Friday as a day of preparation; for, with the coming of sundown (6:00 P.M.) the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) would begin and work must cease for twenty-four hours. Meals had to be prepared for Saturday's dinner and business transacted which could not wait til Sunday, etc.)

Passover itself commenced an 8 day celebration. Passover always falls on the 15th day of Nisan. We do not know on which week day Passover fell in the year of Jesus' death because we cannot be sure which year He died in. We cannot be sure of the year of His birth nor whether He minister for 2 or 3 years.

We can begin with Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42 and Luke 23:54 who agree that Jesus died on the day of the Preparation. Was that the preparation for the weekly

Sabbath, i.e., Friday or was it the Preparation for the Passover, the 14th of Nisan, whatever calendar day that fell on? We cannot be sure. The simplest view makes it BOTH, i.e., Friday the 14th of Nisan. John's Gospel would not contradict this view. John 19:31 tells us that Jesus died on the 14th, and that the Jews wanted the body entombed before sunset, i.e., when the Passover feast would begin. (John 19:14 also is in agreement.) Accordingly, John 13:1 informs us that Jesus had His last Passover meal the day BEFORE everyone else did. Mark agrees (14:12).

This view makes Passover and the weekly Sabbath coincide, i.e., a double Sabbath. All Scripture is in agreement with the possible exception of one: Matthew 12:40, where Jesus prophesied that He would be three nights in the grave. Since we know He had risen by the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1), i.e., Sunday, we count only TWO nights between His death, Friday and His Resurrection, Sunday. The solution is simple for many scholars. They feel that the analogy with Jonah must not be taken to such an extreme, and that the wording of this verse does not mean "three entire days" but rather "into the third day." In short, they see no contradiction.

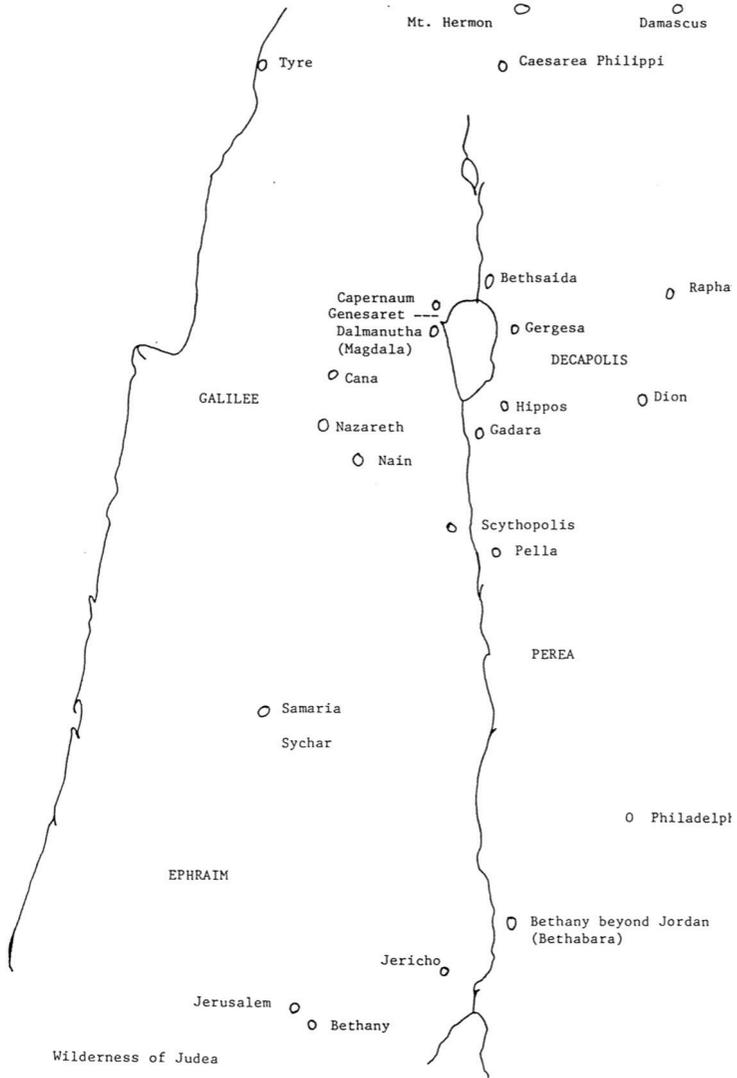
Those who have a problem with Matthew 12:40 solve it logically. Starting at Jesus' Resurrection, Sunday, they back up THREE ENTIRE days to determine the day of His death, i.e., Wednesday. (Don't forget that each Jewish day begins six hours earlier than ours. Jesus actually rose from the dead Saturday evening at 6:00 P.M. our time.) To reconcile all the other Scripture with this, we merely understand that every reference to a Sabbath in the above mentioned verses actually refers to Passover or High-Sabbath--NOT the weekly Sabbath. Since we do not know the calendar day on which the 15th of Nisan fell, we can assume it was Thursday (starting Wednesday evening at

six).

It must be emphasized that Matthew 28:1 does refer to the weekly Sabbath regardless of the chosen view. Also, BOTH views, in agreement with Paul, (I Corinthians 5:7) underline the Truth that while the priests were slaying the paschal lambs--AT THAT VERY HOUR--our Paschal Lamb was being slain! That was the appointed hour of His death.

[You might want to read: <https://peacecrusader.wordpress.com/2009/04/04/which-day-of-the-week-did-the-crucifixion-occur/>]

Map Of Palestine



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