

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 24
The Ministry of Christ in Jerusalem at Pentecost and then back in Galilee - Spring 28
A.D.

In lesson 23 we ended with the study of the first part of John 5, in which Jesus healed the invalid beside the Pool of Bethesda. Afterward He had defended Himself against the Jewish leaders for healing on the Sabbath and had said that God was His Father. One of the last things Jesus had said to them in John 5 was:

John 5:17b “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

This infuriated the Jews who determined, even more firmly, to kill Him as soon as they could. Jesus next expanded on the idea that the work that He was doing was related to His relationship with His Father. The narrative of this defense, we find only in John 5. It doesn't appear in the three Synoptic Gospels.

John 5:19a **Jesus gave them this answer further explanation:**

The Greek word translated “answer” by the NIV is ἀποκρίνομαι {ä-po-krē'-no-mī} which in this context is better understood as “to speak, but always where something has preceded (either said or done) to which the remarks refer.¹ Here Jesus was expanding or enlarging on His remarks about His and the Father's works being to the same purpose in John 5:17b. I think the translation “further explanation” rather than just “answer” is more accurate.

John 5:19b **“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself;**

In one sense, this is affirming that the power that was on display in the miracles of Jesus' ministry all came from the Father. Of Himself, in His incarnation, Jesus had no more power than any normal man. However, the power of the Father was available to Him because He walked perfectly according to the Father's will.

John 5:19c-20a **he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.**

In another sense Jesus was telling them the same thing that He later told Philip:

John 14:9b-10 “‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.’ How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.’”

¹ *Outline of Biblical Usage, Blue Letter Bible.*

Of course, there was no way those Jews would comprehend or believe what Jesus was saying. Although they claimed to be experts in the Scripture, they were too spiritually blind to believe or understand “the Living Word.”

John 5:20b Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

The healing of the man beside the pool and all the other miracles combined would pale in comparison to the miracles to come. Those miracles would be Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the throne of God. Finally, it would be the redemption of all who would believe in Him.

John 5:21a For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life,

These Jews were most probably Pharisees. They considered themselves the guardians of the Law. One of the major theological disagreements between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was over whether there was a resurrection after death. The Pharisees had made the resurrection of the dead the foundation of their theological superiority over the Sadducees. At least on this issue they agreed with Jesus.

John 5:21b-22 even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

Jesus was warning the Pharisees that in the resurrection, in which they believed, He was the one who would have the power to determine the eternal fate of the resurrected souls.²

John 5:23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

Instead of plotting Jesus’ death, these Pharisees would have been better advised to honor Him as who He was. He was the fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies and promises. As it was, they were not only dishonoring the Son, but they were also dishonoring the Father.

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

To honor the Son required simply believing the Word of the Father about the Son who the Father had sent. Jesus was the living embodiment of that Word. Such faith would take them from condemnation to life. There were no works of the flesh involved.

² *This refers to those who will appear at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. Those who will be “resurrected” to appear there will all be those who have spurned the free gift of life offered by Jesus. They will be condemned to eternal separation from God (Hell).*

John 5:25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

The crowds of unbelievers that Jesus addressed were “the dead” because they were spiritually dead. Jesus frequently admonished such crowds, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” You must understand that there are two types of “hearing” in view. There was the physical hearing of all “the dead” who had physical ears. There was also spiritual hearing where the words of the Gospel were heard with a spirit of seeking God. The Holy Spirit could then take those words and make them real to the human spirit. Faith in that revelation would result in eternal life. “The dead” had been born dead “in Adam” but would be reborn and become alive “in Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:22 “For as in Adam all die,³ so in Christ all will be made alive.”

Ephesians 2:4-5 “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

There are different kinds of life in scripture. There is physical life which all mankind receives when they are born and then loses when they die physically. There is also the existential life of the soul which is never lost. Those who die never lose existential life. Even those who are condemned still exist although they are separated from God. Then there is also “Eternal Life.” “Eternal life” is spiritual and is so called because it is sharing the life of “the Eternal One” who is the LORD. There is only one way for a human being to share that life. In his later epistle John described it as being “in His Son.” The following verses describe this “Eternal Life.”

1 John 5:11-13 “And this is the testimony: God has given ⁴ us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have **eternal life**.”

1 John 5:20 “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and **eternal life**.”

³ *The literal translation and understanding of Genesis 2:17 “You (Adam) must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it dying (spiritually) you will die (physically).”*

⁴ *The Greek here is ἔδωκεν {edoken} in the aorist active indicative. It occurs at a point of time.*

John 5:27 **And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.**

Jesus will have authority to judge mankind because He is not only God, but because He is the one who will have bought the pardon for those who are saved by His atoning death and imputed righteous life.

John 5:28a **“Marvel ⁵ not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves
KJV**

The phrase “all that are in the graves” simply refers to all that have died, both believer and unbeliever.”

John 5:28b-29a **shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; KJV**

There are two gatherings in view here when the souls of the dead will be gathered or “come forth.” The first gathering (sometimes called “the Rapture”) will be at the beginning of the Tribulation. Then all living believers living on earth at that time will rendezvous in the air with all believers who have died in the past ages. There they will join Jesus to begin to celebrate what is known as “the wedding supper of the Lamb.”⁶ The second gathering will be the resurrection of all unbelievers at the end of the Millennium for the Great White Throne Judgment (1007 years later).

John 5:29b **those who have done good will rise (stand forth) to live, and those who have done evil will rise (stand forth) to be condemned.**

Jesus explained during His ministry what it will take to be defined as having “done good”:

John 6:28-29 “Then they asked him (*Jesus*), ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’”

Earlier in his Gospel John had similarly explained how to escape condemnation:

John 3:18 “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

⁵ The Greek word here is θαυμάζω {thau-mä'-zō}. The phrase is perhaps more accurately understood as “do not ponder on this as something that is unexpected or surprising.”

⁶ This does not mean that it is only then, as some seem to believe, when the dead in Christ will get bodies. The New Testament clearly portrays believers who have died as having bodies. Witness Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-3), Abraham and the beggar Lazarus (Luke 6:19-31), and those who were seen walking around Jerusalem after Christ’s resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53).

John 5:30a **By myself I can do nothing;**

Jesus explained that He was doing only what was according to the Father's eternal plan and He was only doing it by means of the Father's power. This was also an important commentary on the nature of the hypostatic union. At His birth Jesus had laid down the power of His deity.⁷ He had lived His human life by total faith in the Father while maintaining His righteousness, holiness, and sinlessness. All His miracles were done because of His prayers to the Father who then used His power on His Son's behalf.

John 5:30b **I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.**

In His incarnation Jesus didn't have access to the omniscience of His deity. His judgment was based only on what He observed with His human senses. However, His judgment was right because He always based it on His Father's will revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit.

John 5:31 **“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.**

Here Jesus wasn't talking about the court of Eternal Truth, but about the court of the elders of Israel, which was the Sanhedrin. There, according to the Law laid down in Deuteronomy, testimony must be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses:

Deuteronomy 19:15b “A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

John 5:32-33 **There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. “You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.**

This was a few months after John had been put in prison, but it was before He had been executed. John the Baptist was acknowledged as a great teacher or rabbi. Only an acknowledged teacher or rabbi could “ordain” another teacher or rabbi according to the Jewish system. Not that Jesus was subject to the Jewish system, but He was pointing out that even according to their system, He had been properly validated.

It is interesting that this indicates that these enemies of Christ had actually sent representatives to John the Baptist in prison. It is possible that the Jewish leaders had noted the seeming estrangement between John and his disciples and Jesus and His disciples. They possibly hoped that John would repudiate Jesus' claims. That was why they sent representatives to him. Evidently all of John's lingering doubts had been erased by the answer Jesus had sent to him in prison (Matthew 11:1-6, Luke 7:18-23). Instead of repudiating Jesus, he had affirmed Him to the Jews as the prophesied Messiah.

⁷ *This included not only His omnipotence, but also His omniscience and omnipresence.*

John 5:34 **Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.**

According to verse 18, the ones to whom Jesus was giving this reply were the ones who were intent on killing Him. It is a testimony to the love of God that Jesus was so intent on saving these, His enemies, that He even lowered Himself to appeal to the human testimony of John.

John 5:35 **John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.**

John, who was a priest and the son of a priest, had been born about six months earlier than Jesus. He had baptized Jesus when they were both about thirty years old. Twenty years was counted as the age of maturity for service (1 Chronicles 23:27). Therefore, I expect that the ministry of John as a lamp of truth had lasted for almost eleven years. He was just over 31 years when he was arrested.

John 5:36 **“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.**

The second, much weightier, witness was the work Jesus was doing which had been prophesied in all the writings of Moses and the Prophets.

John 5:37a **And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.**

Besides the testimony of the Father’s power displayed in all the miracles, the Father had even testified from heaven at the Baptism of Jesus “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22.

John 5:37b-38 **You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.**

Despite their own proclamation of their knowledge of God, the Jewish leaders’ rejection of God’s Son proclaimed they had no relationship with the LORD.

John 5:39-40 **You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**

Their “understanding” of Scriptures was based on a profound misunderstanding and hostile rejection of who the “I am who I am”⁸ was. It would cost them the “eternal life” that Jesus was

⁸ *Exodus 3:14 “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*

giving away.

John 5:41-42 “I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

Jesus wasn't expecting them to acclaim him. He knew such praise was worthless because they didn't love God, which was the only basis for acceptable praise. This principle was proved during the week of His crucifixion. The crowds first welcomed Him with acclaim. Then three days later, many of them stood dumb while their leaders crucified Him.

John 5:43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

Although the Pharisees and Sadducees made a great show of their ritual worship, they were not really looking for an answer from God. Their worship wasn't spiritual but worldly. It was of the flesh. This point was proved during the Bar Kochba rebellion about one hundred years later when most of the Jewish nation rose up united in support of a false messiah named Simon bar Kochba.⁹

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

Jesus had previously warned about the religious leaders' primary inner motivation of seeking the praise and attention of men (Matthew 6:1-6).

John 5:45 “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.

The Jewish Pharisees taught a system of salvation based on their conception of “keeping the Law” instead of trusting in the LORD's promised atonement. However, without faith they could never keep the Law of Moses which was built around the promise of a free atonement for sin provided by God. Therefore, the Law of Moses would be their accuser.

John 5:46-47 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

⁹ *Simon bar Kochba was the Jewish leader of what is known as the Bar Kochba revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 CE, establishing an independent Jewish state which he ruled for three years as Nasi (“Prince”). His state was conquered by the Romans in 135 A.D. following a two-and-a-half-year war. The Jewish sage Rabbi Akiva indulged the possibility that Simon could be the Jewish messiah. He gave him the surname “Bar Kochba” meaning “Son of the Star” in Aramaic, from the Star Prophecy verse from Numbers 24:17: “There shall come a star out of Jacob.” Wikipedia.*

The life and atoning ministry of Christ are all over the Law of Moses in the shadows presented in the Tabernacle, the Feasts, and the sacrifices. It is also all over the history of mankind and Israel going all the way back to the earliest part of Genesis.

The Second Part of the Long Galilean Ministry
It took place during the time after Pentecost 5/28 through Passover 3/29 A.D.

It seems as if, not long before the time that Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem for Pentecost, He had called the Twelve to Himself and had given them powers which would give authority to their message. This event is described in the passages below. At that time, He had sent them out in six teams of two to preach His message and perform miracles. This may be why they didn't seem to be in evidence in Jerusalem at that Pentecost which was described in John 5. Thus, the account in Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9 below seems to have occurred just before Jesus' visit to Jerusalem. We don't know for sure how long they were out on their mission, but I expect it was at least a month or two. We do know that just after the time Jesus sent them out, some of John the Baptist's disciples had come from him with a question for Jesus (Matthew 11:2). Just when Jesus' disciples came back, word had come of John's execution (Matthew 14:13) by Herod Antipas at Macherus, over a hundred miles by road south of Capernaum. Depending on whether the visit to Jerusalem was at Pentecost or at the Feast of Dedication (Hannukah), there were either eight months or three months during which the mission Jesus had sent them on could have been completed before the time they were regathered. As I have previously stated, I think His Jerusalem visit was at Pentecost. The time of their regathering was before the next Passover of 29 A.D.

Matthew 10:1-4 **He called his twelve disciples to him ¹⁰ and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles:¹¹ first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and *Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus*;¹² Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

The pairings connected by an "and" here seem to have been the pairings on this mission. Here, Peter was paired with his brother Andrew, James with his brother John, Thomas with his brother Matthew. Philip and Bartholomew (also called Nathaniel) also seem to have been

¹⁰ *He had selected them as the Twelve, about a month or so earlier. Most of them had been following Him for over a year.*

¹¹ *Details of the Apostle's lives were covered in lesson 11.*

¹² *The Textus Receptus reads "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus." The faulty Textus Sinaiticus reads just "Thaddaeus." He was also called Judas, son of James in the list of the Twelve in Luke 6:13-16. Both names, Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus, are of uncertain origin and meaning.*

paired. Both were fisherman and had been among the first six who had followed Jesus (John 1:37-51). Simon, who was paired with Judas Iscariot, is the most obscure of the Twelve in the post scriptural literature and legends.

Mark 6:6b-7 **Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.**

Luke 9:1-2 **When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**

It is interesting to note that Judas Iscariot, who was an unbeliever, was also given power to perform miracles. Of course, the real power was still from the Father.

Matthew 10:5-6 **These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.**

After Pentecost of 30 A.D., the Gentiles and Samaritans were the hungriest to hear the Gospel. Remember, at this time there was at least one Gentile, the formerly demon possessed man from Gadara, who was spreading the news of the Gospel among his own people (Mark 5:18-20, Luke 8:34-39). The Gospel was also being spread among the Samaritans from the woman at the well and her village where Jesus had spent two whole days teaching them (John 4:4-43). The mission of the twelve at that time was to reach the “lost sheep of Israel.” It was only a little more than 40 years before half of the people of their nation were destroyed.¹³

This exclusion of the Gentiles and Samaritans at this point in the ministry of Jesus and His disciples wasn't mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Remember, Matthew was the first Gospel written and was aimed primarily at the Jews. Mark and Luke were written much later to the Gentiles.

Matthew 10:7 **As you go, preach this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near at hand.”**

This had also been the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2) and Jesus (Matthew 4:17). The Greek word translated “kingdom” here is βασιλεία {bä-sē-lā'-ä} which denotes all who recognize the dominion of a King. It does not necessarily refer to territory, but rather to adherents. The Kingdom of Heaven¹⁴ or the Kingdom of God which Jesus brought was the presentation of Himself as the one to whom was due worship and obedience. The final full presentation of Himself as King came on Palm Sunday where He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter

¹³ *It is estimated that the scattered Jews, and those in Judea, Galilee, and Egypt, numbered about 7 million or about ten percent of the total population in the Roman Empire.*

¹⁴ *The term “Kingdom of Heaven” only appears on Matthew.*

of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” His death on the Cross was a presentation of His resume. It was quite different from the world’s concept of a King as Jesus later pointed out in Mark:

Mark 10:42-45 “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

The word translated “near” in Matthew 10:7 is the Greek word ἐγγίζω {en-gē'-zō} which is more often translated “at hand.” Its base word means to squeeze or throttle. In other words, it is in one’s hand or almost close enough to touch.

Matthew 10:8a Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.

Like Jesus had done, they were to confirm the authority of their message that the kingdom was near with miracles from God.

Matthew 10:8b Freely you have received, freely give.

As they had received the word of truth and salvation freely and without condition, they were to teach it freely and without condition. Neither the teaching nor the miracles were to be sold.

Matthew 10:9-10 Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff;¹⁵ for the worker is worth his keep.

Mark 6:8-9 These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey ~~except~~—a *not even a staff*—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.

Luke 9:3 He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.

What better way was there for the Lord to teach them to walk day by day, trusting to God’s provision for the day, and leaving tomorrow to Him as He had told them earlier:

Matthew 6:34 “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

¹⁵ The Greek word for staff is ῥάβδος {hrab'-dos}. It could be used as a walking stick and as a means of defense. The implication was that they were leaving their defense in the LORD’s hands.

I have adjusted the translation of the Greek phrase εἰ μὴ {i may} in Mark from “except a” to “not even a.” This is the accurate translation and it brings the text into harmony with Matthew and Luke.

Matthew 10:11-13 “**Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving worthy,¹⁶ let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.**

Mark 6:10 **Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.**

Luke 9:4 **Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.**

These verses spoke of the house they stayed in when they entered a town. Who was worthy? It was only those whose worth was acquired by loving the only one who is worthy.

Revelation 5:12 “In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’”

Jesus had defined such worthiness earlier in Matthew:

Matthew 10:37-38 “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Also, Paul spoke of worthiness in Acts:

Acts 13:46 “Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you (the Jews) first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”

Matthew 10:14-15 **If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.¹⁷**

Mark 6:11 **And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”**

¹⁶ This Greek word which is translated “deserving” here is the same Greek word ἄξιός {ä'-ksē-os} which was translated “worthy” in verse 11 of in the same passage. It should be translated “worthy” both times.

¹⁷ Remember, at least for Sodom and Gomorrah, three were saved, Lot and his two daughters.

Luke 9:5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.”

These verses spoke of the towns which, in their entirety, had rejected them. For the disciples to shake the dust of that town off their feet was to say that as those people had rejected the word of God, God would reject them. Their feet had fulfilled the promise of the image presented in Isaiah:

Isaiah 52:7 “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation.”

Mark 6:12-13 They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Luke 9:6 So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

The Greek word in Mark translated “repent” is μετανοέω {me-tä-no-e'-ō}. Literally it means “change your understanding.” In its Latin roots the English word “repent” means about the same thing. The Latin word “pensare” means to “ponder” or “think.” Thus, in its root meaning, the English “repent” means “re-think” or “to think again.” Unfortunately, through the distortion of Scripture over the centuries “repent” came to mean “to feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin.”

In a Scriptural context the actual Greek word μετανοέω should be understood to mean “to change one’s understanding of God from error to the truth.” That truth was the “good news” of God’s grace. In the Luke account that preaching is expressed by the Greek word translated “preaching the Gospel.” The original Greek is εὐαγγελίζω {yü-än-ge-lē'-zō}. It literally means “bringing the message of the good news.” It is the word from which the English language gets “evangelize.”

What follows below in the verses from Matthew are additional words of advice that Jesus gave the twelve. Many of the warnings given in verses 16-23 did not really begin to apply until after Jesus was crucified over a year and a half later. However, they still stand as advice to Christians who carry the Lord’s message in this world. That should include every one of us.

Matthew 10:16a I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.

Often the most dangerous wolves masquerade as “messengers of light”:

(Jesus speaking) Matthew 7:15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Acts 20:29-30 “I (*Paul*) know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

Matthew 10:16b **Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.**

In scripture, snakes are a figure for Satan. To be “as shrewd as snakes” simply means that we should not be naïve about Satan and his world. In Scripture, doves are a figure for the Holy Spirit and Christ. To be “as innocent as doves” means that we should walk according to the pattern of love and faith embodied in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 10:17 **“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.**

This only began for the followers of Christ after the Pentecost of 30 A.D. This revealed the persecution Jewish Christians would undergo from the Jewish Synagogues.

Matthew 10:18 **On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.**

Here, Christ looked further down the road to when they would be persecuted for carrying the good news to the Gentiles. This was something the Twelve hadn’t even imagined to that point.

Matthew 10:19-20 **But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would always give them the right words to say. They were not necessarily words that would deliver them from harm, but they were the words which would speak truth into the hearts of their listeners.

Matthew 10:21 **“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.**

The betrayers here would be unbelievers, and the ones being betrayed to the religious authorities would be believers.

Matthew 10:22 **All men will hate you because of me, but he who ~~stands firm~~ remains behind to the end will be **saved** delivered.**

I have corrected the translation. The Greek word which the NIV translated “stands firm” is ὑπομένω {hū-po-me'-nō}. It literally means “to tarry or remain behind.” The Greek word translated by the NIV as “saved” is σώζω {sō'-zō}. It can also mean “rescued or delivered.”

This isn't talking about our being saved from eternal condemnation. That would imply that our deliverance from sin depends on our "standing firm" until the end of our life and would deny the efficacy of Christ's death and our eternal security. It is talking about those people who "remain behind to the end" (the end of the Church Age). So, the question is: What will they be delivered from? I think this was speaking of the deliverance of the final generation of the Church from the Great Tribulation by the Rapture.

Matthew 10:23 **When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.**

I believe "the cities of Israel" here refers to the cities where the Children of Israel lived in their tens of thousands. They were cities like Rome, Damascus, and Alexandria. There were many other such cities outside of Judea and Galilee. They were in Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Cyprus, and Persia (among others).

Edersheim ¹⁸ has contended that "the Son of Man coming" refers to His coming in judgment on the Jews in the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

I think this is reasonable because this whole passage is about the appeal of Jesus' first disciples to the Jews. When you compare this passage with Luke 21:12-24, it becomes clear that Jesus was clear about a judgment which would take place at the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles, in other words, the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem.

Matthew 10:24-25 **"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub,¹⁹ how much more the members of his household!**

If the disciples got discouraged about the opposition they would undergo, and the names they would be called, they would need to remember that Jesus was called Beelzebub (Satan).

Matthew 10:26-27 **"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.**

This was specifically aimed at the Twelve. They were leaving to preach exclusively to the Jews. At that time there was much about Christ's First Advent that had not yet been revealed. Christ's

¹⁸ *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, The Ascent Chapter 28, Edersheim.*

¹⁹ *Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15 The Pharisees called Jesus, their teacher, Beelzebub. The Greek word is Βεελζεβοὺλ {beh-el-zeb-ool'}. It is derived from the Aramaic בַּעַל זְבוּב {bah'-al zev-oob'} which was an idol worshipped by the Philistines. It was another name for Satan. The name means "Lord of the Flies." Flies stand for corruption.*

death, burial, and resurrection during Passover Week in Jerusalem would reveal the meaning of much in the Old Testament which was still hidden. When the “daylight” of those events came, they could shout their meaning from the roof tops.

Matthew 10:28 **Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

Eleven of those twelve disciples had no reason to fear Hell. They had believed and trusted in the Son. However, there was one who hadn't. That was Judas Iscariot, and Jesus was always trying to reach him. Out of the twelve, this warning was specifically for him.

Matthew 10:29-31 **Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

Those faithful disciples were secure in the Father's love. Nothing could happen to them apart from the loving will of God. There was no detail in their life of which the Father wasn't aware. Most of them would eventually die a martyr's death, but even in that death they need not fear.

Matthew 10:32 **“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.**

What might seem like a personal repudiation and loss when their witness was rejected by men would later be regarded as a triumph at throne of the Father.

Matthew 10:33 **But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.**

Whoever tried to preserve themselves by disowning Christ would be disowned by the Father. There was one of the Twelve who did that and he was condemned forever.

Matthew 10:34 **“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**

Any Christian who holds Christian ideas and values in this world and expects to find peace with this world has forgotten who rules this world. It is Satan's ideas and values that dominate this world. It is Satan that is the ruler of this world although he is restrained in what he can do by the LORD. He has not yet been fully bound as he will be.

Furthermore, Satan is an expert at subverting or taking over human institutions. Historically, he has had a great deal of success in corrupting the “institutional church.” There is only one institution that he is helpless against, and that is the “Spiritual Church,” which is the true body of Christ.

Matthew 10:35-36 **For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.**

Here Jesus quoted Micah:

Micah 7:6 “For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man’s enemies are the members of his own household.”

This was speaking of the enmity of unbelieving Jews toward their Christian family members as referenced earlier in Matthew 10:21. It was not endorsing enmity of Christians toward their own unbelieving families as I have heard some non-Christian speakers assert.

Matthew 10:37 **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;**

This is telling believers that if the enmity which their families will have toward them is a greater loss to them than the gain of the love of Christ, they are not worthy of Christ.

Matthew 10:38 **and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

The believer is to imitate the humility and faith of Christ as exemplified by His death on the Cross. Here, Jesus was also prophesying the manner of death He would die (on a cross). It was only afterward that His disciples could have understood the depth of what He had said.

Matthew 10:39a **Whoever finds his life will lose it,**

This was what the worldly King Solomon discovered. Solomon had everything that worldly mankind strives for and found it was “meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Matthew 10:39b **and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

Someone who gave everything that the world counts as valuable, even his life, for Christ’s sake would find a treasure that would last forever. These words undoubtedly later comforted most of these men when they died a martyr’s death.

Matthew 10:40 **“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.**

The families that received the disciples on this mission trip should understand that, in God’s eyes, their honor was as great as if they had received Jesus Himself. And, of course, in receiving Jesus they were also receiving the Father.

Matthew 10:41 **Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.**

Someone who helped a prophet or righteous person on their mission was viewed by God as part of that same mission.

Matthew 10:42 **And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”²⁰**

And what would be this reward? The greatest reward possible would be the revelation of God's truth to their souls. Notice that this called the prophets and the righteous “these little ones.” This underscores the necessity of humility in service to the LORD.

Matthew 11:1 **After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.**

Evidently, for a time He was without the presence of the Twelve (Luke 9:6, Mark 6:12). They would be preaching elsewhere in teams of two. Of course, He still had with Him the other disciples who would later make up the seventy that He sent out later (Luke 10:1).

Matthew 11:2-30 which concerned the visit of John's disciples and Jesus' testimony that John was a great prophet was already covered in Lesson 21 in a different context. The events of Matthew 12 were also previously covered in Lesson 20. The events in that chapter included the visit of Jesus' family to where He was teaching and the debate about how Jesus cast out demons.

Matthew 13 was also previously covered in Lesson 21. That chapter included the parable of the farmer who sowed his seed which fell upon different ground:

In the account in Mark the events of Matthew 12-13 and Luke 8 were recorded just before the recording of the trip across the Sea of Galilee during the storm. This is consistent with the fact that Matthew and Luke recorded them after the story of the storm. That is because Mark isn't specific as to when those events happened. It merely reads as follows: Mark 4:1 “Again Jesus began to teach by the lake.” The words don't specify time, but merely place. They would have been equally applicable to any time during Jesus' long ministry in Galilee.

Matthew 14:1-2 **At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants,²¹ “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead!”²² That is why**

²⁰ *This promise was repeated later in His ministry as recorded in Mark 9:41.*

miraculous powers are at work in him.”

Mark 6:14-16 **King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.” But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”**

These were peculiar statements. Certainly, Herod had to have been aware that Jesus was as old as John was and had been active in ministry for at least two years and been performing miracles during all that time. It seems to me that Herod’s statement implied that he had a terrified guilt and paranoia about his execution of John the Baptist. We know that it was about this time that Herod started plotting with the Pharisees to kill Jesus, so Herod must have felt that somehow the spirit of John was working through Jesus to avenge his own wrongful death.

Luke 9:7-9 **Now Herod the tetrarch (*Herod Antipas*) heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, “I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?” And he tried to see him.**

From this time until after the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus rarely visited Herod’s territory, spending most of His time in the north in the Decapolis or in Philip’s territories in Gaulinitis. After that He went south and then spent most of His last six months in Judea.

Herod’s capital in Galilee was Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee, but we know from Josephus that he had John the Baptist executed at Macherus where Herod was living at the time. Macherus was a castle and the capital of his southern territories of Perea east of the Dead Sea. Perhaps the reason that Herod was just now becoming so very aware of Jesus’ ministry was that he had been absent in Perea during most of Jesus’ Galileean ministry. This would have made political sense because Herod Antipas had made a mortal enemy of King Aretas of Nabatea by divorcing Aretas’ daughter. Nabatea bordered on Perea. Eventually, in about 36 A.D. King Aretas declared war on Herod Antipas and defeated him with disastrous consequences for Herod. At this time Herod was about sixty

²¹ *One of those “attendants” may have been his steward Cuza, whose wife was one of those women who attended Jesus (Mark 8:3).*

²² *At least in this belief in resurrection Herod showed himself sympathetic to the Pharisees.*



Political Division of Israel in 29 A.D.

Green – Ruler Pontius Pilate, Orange – Ruler Herod Antipas, Yellow – Ruler Herod Philip

Matthew 14:3-4 **Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.”**

Mark 6:17 **For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”**

Mark’s account implies that John the Baptist had a private interview with Herod. Evidently Herod tried to get John to justify Herod’s marriage. Herod’s marriage was against the Mosaic Law on two counts. First, it was against the Law to marry a brother’s wife. Second, it was against the Law to marry a niece (Herodias was the daughter of Herod’s half-brother Aristobulus). When John refused to change his correct interpretation of the Law, Herod’s wife Herodias became furious.

Contrary to some dramatic presentations I have seen, I do not believe that John ever brought up the issue of Herod's marriage in his preaching to the crowds. John's mission wasn't to preach the marriage laws, but to herald the coming of the Messiah of Grace. I believe that it was the Pharisees who would publicly raise the question before John in order to get him in trouble with Herod Antipas. They succeeded in turning Herod Antipas against John.

Matthew 14:5 Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

Mark 6:19-20 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

Herod only decided to kill John to oblige his wife Herodias. Personally, he was intellectually stimulated by John's teaching although he didn't accept it. However, although he was willing to kill John to please Herodias, he was also worried about the reaction of the people to killing an innocent prophet. In the long run, he clearly thought more of his own convenience than he did of justice or the Truth.

Matthew 14:6-11 On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias ²³ danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison.²⁴ His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.

Mark 6:21-28 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went,

²³ *It is Josephus that tells us her name was Salome. She was the daughter of Herodias and Herod Antipas' brother Philip.*

²⁴ *According to Josephus, Herod had John beheaded at the Palace/Fortress at Macherus, just east of the Northeastern coast of the Dead Sea. Josephus, Antiquities Book 18, Chapter 5, 2*

beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother.

The comment of Edersheim about Herod is apt:

“Unfaithful to his God, to his conscience, to truth and righteousness; not ashamed of any crime or sin, he would yet be faithful to his half-drunken oath and appear honorable and true before such companions!” Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, The Ascent, Chap. 28, Edersheim

Mark 6:29 **On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.**

Matthew 14:12 **John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.**

I expect that from then on, most of John’s loyal disciples started to follow Jesus.

This is an account of the history of Herod and John the Baptist from the 1st Century A.D. Jewish (and Christian) historian Josephus in his book *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVIII, Chapter 5, Paragraph 3:

“Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.²⁵ Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army (*in 36 A.D. by King Aretas*) was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.”

²⁵ *Josephus wrote this after he had become a believer and knew that righteousness came by faith.*