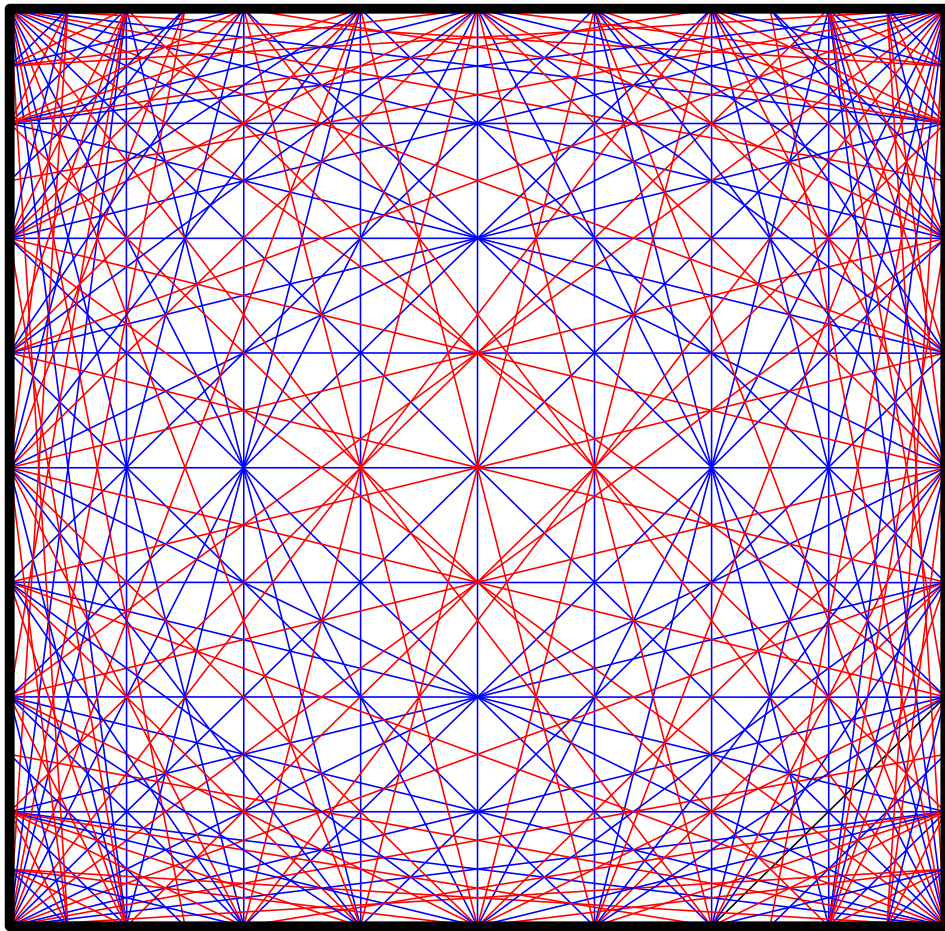


GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN



As Told in the Bible

Stuart R. Kerr, III

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

A Personal Note:

- Acknowledgment

INTRODUCTION

God's Will
Bible Revelation

CHAPTER ONE THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Bible Canon

Bible Development and Translations:

- The Old Testament
- The Synoptic Gospels
- The Gospel of Mark
- The Gospel of Matthew
- The Gospel of Luke
- The Gospel of John
- Acts
- The New Testament of the Early Church

CHAPTER TWO BIBLE HISTORY

Genesis

The Age of the Patriarchs – 2000 to 1500 B.C.

The Age of Moses – 1350 to 1250 B.C.

The Judges of Israel – 1220 to 1020 B.C.

The Early Monarchy – 1020 to 922 B.C.

The Divided Kingdom and the Rise of Prophecy – 922 to 722 B.C.

The Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles – 722 to 539 B.C.

The Persian Period – 539 to 336 B.C.

The Hellenistic to Maccabean Periods – 336 to 63 B.C.

The Roman Period and the Time of Jesus – 63 B.C. to A.D. 135

CHAPTER THREE COVENANTS

God's Covenants, Commands, Promises
God's Covenant with Adam
God's Covenant with Noah
God's Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
God's Covenant with Moses and the Israelites
God's Covenant with Phineas and the Priesthood
God's Covenant with Joshua
God's Covenant with David and Solomon
The New Covenant

.....

CHAPTER FOUR REBELLION AND ORIGINAL SIN

Rebellion in Heaven
The Original Sin of Adam
Death through Adam, Life through Jesus Christ

.....

CHAPTER FIVE SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP

Sacrificial Ritual
Israel's Sacrifices and Offerings
Mosaic Tribal Sacrifice
Jerusalem Temple Ritual
Redemption through Jesus Christ

.....

CHAPTER SIX HEAVENLY HOST, GODS AND GODDESSES, IDOLS AND EVIL PRACTICES

Heavenly Host:

- Angels
- Seraphim
- Cherubim
- Archangel Michael
- Gabriel
- Raphael
- Angel of the Lord

- Commander of the Army of the Lord
- Ancient of Days
- Melchizedek (“My King is Righteous”)
- Prince of the Air (Prince of the World)
- Lucifer (“Morning Star”) – Satan – The Devil
- Demons and Deceiving Spirits
- The “sons of God” and the Nephilim

Gods and Goddesses
Idols and Evil Practices

CHAPTER SEVEN THE LORD’S DISCIPLINE

Judgment, Repentance, and Restoration

- God’s Sovereignty
- Israel’s Transgressions
- The Wrath of God
- God’s Discipline
- God’s Grace and Mercy
- Israel’s Restoration

Jeremiah’s Complaint

CHAPTER EIGHT PROPHECY AND ESCHATOLOGY

Old Testament Messianic Prophecy

New Testament Eschatology - The Second Coming of Christ, End-Times

The “Millennium” Issue

- Amillennialism
- Postmillennialism
- Premillennialism

Resurrection of the Dead

- The Resurrection Body

CHAPTER NINE JESUS CHRIST

Birth and Genealogy

John the Baptist

Pharisees and Sadducees
Zealots and Essenes
Samaritans
Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God

- Jesus, The Finger of God

Jesus' Gospel
The Kingdom of God
Ministry of Jesus
Parables
The Good Shepherd
Healing and Miracles
Fruit of the Kingdom
Transfiguration
Crucifixion
Resurrection
Pentecost

CHAPTER TEN THE EARLY CHURCH

The Life of Paul
Paul's Missionary Journeys
Paul's Message
The Early Christian Church
Church Heresies

- Adoptionism – The human Jesus adopted by God
- Apollinarianism - Christ had a single divine mind
- Arianism – The Son and The Father are not fully equal
- Docetism – Christ had no real human nature
- Gnosticism – Duality of material versus spiritual
- Macedonianism (Pneumatomachians) - “Spirit Fighters”
- Monarchianism – God is unity, not three persons
- Monophysitism (Eutychianism) – Jesus has one divine nature
- Nestorianism – Mary is not “God-bearer”
- Pelagianism – Salvation by good works
- Sabellianism - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are characterizations of one God

Sacraments:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist
- Penance
- Anointing the Sick
- Holy Orders

- Matrimony

Triune Spirit:

- The Spirit of the Father – The Power of God's Spirit
- The Spirit of the Spirit – The Wisdom of the Holy Spirit
- The Spirit of the Son – The Understanding of the Spirit of Truth

The Trinity:

- Early Trinity Developments
- The Christian Trinity

Creedal Statements

- The Apostle's Creed (late 2nd century)
- The Nicene Creed (325)
- The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)
- The Chalcedonian Creed (451)
- The Athanasian Creed (c. 5th or 6th Century)
- The Creed of the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675)
- The Fourth Lateran Council (1215)
- The Council of Florence (1438-1445)
- The Creed of the Council of Trent (1564)
- The First Vatican Council - Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith (1870)

.....

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PAULINE THEOLOGY - ATONEMENT TO GLORIFICATION

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

1. Atonement (Propitiation) – Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins.
2. Submission – Obedience to God's authority, with faith in Jesus.
3. Repentance – Remorse for our sinful rebellion against God.
4. Redemption (Ransom) – God's forgiveness for our sins, without penalty.
5. Advocacy (Mediation) – Jesus Christ is our intermediary before God.

SPIRIT MINISTRY

6. Grace (Mercy) – The unmerited favor of God, the gift of God.
7. Election – God's leading of us for a specific purpose.
8. Justification – God makes us "right" (righteous) with him.
9. Sanctification – God makes us "clean and pure" (holy).
10. Reconciliation – God restores us to his presence.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

11. Salvation – Deliverance from the dominion of sin and death.
12. Regeneration – Spiritual rebirth and renewal, union with Christ.
13. Inheritance (Adoption) – Privilege and responsibility as a child of God.
14. Glorification – The ultimate transformation and completion.

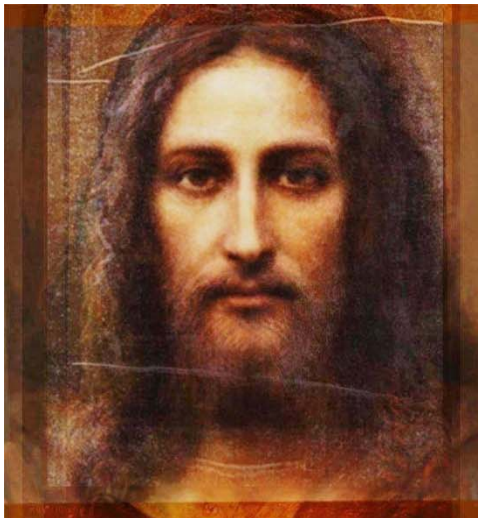
CHAPTER NINE

JESUS CHRIST

Birth and Genealogy
John the Baptist
Pharisees and Sadducees
Zealots and Essenes
Samaritans
Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God

- Jesus, The Finger of God

Jesus' Gospel
The Kingdom of God
Ministry of Jesus
Parables
The Good Shepherd
Healing, Miracles, and Faith
Fruit of the Kingdom
Transfiguration
Crucifixion
Resurrection



"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." [John 6:35]

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." [John 8:12]

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." [John 10:9]

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." [John 10:11]

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." [John 11:25,26]

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [John 14:6]

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." [John 15:5]

Jesus (c.4 BC – c.30/33 AD), also referred to as Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus Christ, was a first-century Jewish preacher and religious leader. He is the central figure of Christianity. Most Christians believe he is the incarnation of God the Son and the long-awaited Messiah (Christ) prophesied in the Old Testament. Virtually all modern scholars of antiquity agree that Jesus existed historically, although the quest for the historical Jesus has produced little agreement on the historical reliability of the Gospels and on how closely the Jesus portrayed in the Bible reflects the historical Jesus. Jesus was a Galilean Jew who was

baptized by John the Baptist and subsequently began his own ministry, preaching his message orally and often being referred to as "rabbi (teacher)". Jesus debated with fellow Jews on how to best follow God, engaged in healings, taught in parables and gathered followers. He was arrested and tried by the Jewish authorities, turned over to the Roman government, and was subsequently crucified on the order of Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect. After his death, his followers believed he rose from the dead, and the community they formed eventually became the early Christian Church.

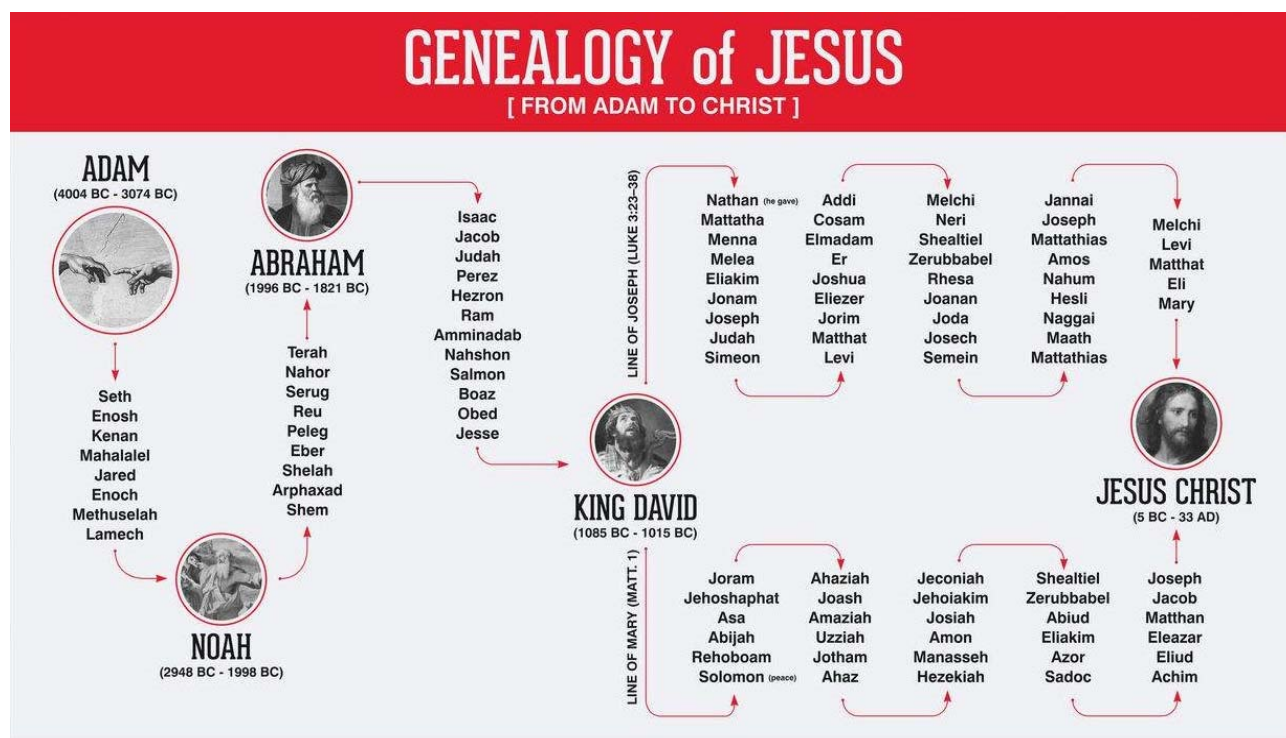
Jesus lived a life which is a revelation of man submitted to the Father's will. This life in the flesh, together with his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, presently became a new principal of the ransom which had thus been paid in order to purchase man back from the clutches of the "evil one" and from the condemnation of an offended God. Christian doctrines include the beliefs that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin named Mary, performed miracles, founded the Church, died by crucifixion as a sacrifice to achieve atonement, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, from where he will return in heavenly glory. Most Christians believe Jesus enables people to be reconciled to God. The Nicene Creed asserts that Jesus will judge the living and the dead either before or after their bodily resurrection, an event tied to the Second Coming of Jesus in Christian eschatology. The great majority of Christians worship Jesus as the incarnation of God the Son, the second of three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit).

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them" declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."
[Jer. 31:31-33]

BIRTH AND GENEALOGY:

The birth and nativity of Jesus is described in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. The two accounts agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the time of Herod the Great, that his mother Mary was married to Joseph, who was of Davidic descent and that his birth was effected by divine intervention. Matthew does not mention the census, annunciation to the shepherds or presentation in the Temple, and does not give the name of the angel that appeared to Joseph to foretell the birth. In Luke there is no mention of Magi, no flight into Egypt, or "massacre of the innocents", and the angel who announces the coming birth to Mary is named as Gabriel. The consensus of scholars is that both gospels were written about 75-85 AD, and while it is possible that one account might be based on the other, or that they share common source material, the majority conclusion is that, in respect of the nativity story, the two are independent of each other.

The New Testament provides two accounts of the genealogy of Jesus, one in the Gospel of Matthew and another in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew starts with Abraham, while Luke begins with Adam. The lists are identical between Abraham and David, but they differ radically from that point on. Matthew has twenty-seven generations from David to Joseph, but Luke has forty-two, with almost no overlap between the names on the two lists. □ Notably, the two accounts also disagree on who Joseph's father was: Matthew says he was Jacob, while Luke says he was Heli. Traditional Christian scholars (starting with the historian Eusebius) have put forward various theories that seek to explain why the lineages are so different, such as that Matthew's account follows the lineage of Joseph, while Luke's follows the lineage of Mary.



The virgin birth of Jesus is the belief that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary through God's Holy Spirit without the agency of a human father and born while Mary was still a virgin. The New Testament references are Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38; it is not expressly mentioned elsewhere in the Christian scriptures, and the modern scholarly consensus is that the doctrine of the virgin birth rests on a very slim historical foundation. The virgin birth was universally accepted in the Christian church and, except for some minor sects, was not seriously challenged until the 18th century. It is enshrined in the creeds that most Christians consider normative, such as the Nicene Creed ("incarnate of the Virgin Mary") and the Apostles' Creed ("born of the Virgin Mary") and is a basic article of belief in the Catholic, Orthodox, and most Protestant churches.

Jesus' childhood home is identified in the gospels of Luke and Matthew as the town of Nazareth in Galilee, where he lived with his family. Nazareth sat in the hilly area of southern Galilee near the crossroads of key caravan trade routes. Nazareth had contact with many

cultures travelling through. Jesus came at a time in history when the entire civilized world was relatively peaceful under Roman rule. Travel was relatively safe and easy, and there was a common language. Although Joseph appears in descriptions of Jesus' childhood, no mention is made of him thereafter. His other family members - his mother, Mary, his brothers James, Joses (or Joseph), Judas and Simon and his unnamed sisters - are mentioned in the gospels and other sources. The Gospel of Mark reports that Jesus comes into conflict with his neighbors and family. Jesus' mother and brothers come to get him (Mark 3:31–35) because people are saying that he is crazy (Mark 3:21). Jesus responds that his followers are his true family. In John, Mary follows Jesus to his crucifixion, and he expresses concern over her well-being (John 19:25–27).

Jesus is called a carpenter, but this could cover makers of objects in various materials, including builders. The gospels indicate that Jesus could read, paraphrase, and debate scripture, but this does not necessarily mean that he received formal scribal training. When Jesus is presented as a baby in the temple per Jewish Law, a man named Simeon says to Mary and Joseph that Jesus "shall stand as a sign of contradiction, while a sword will pierce your own soul. Then the secret thoughts of many will come to light" (Luke 2:28–35). Several years later, when Jesus goes missing on a visit to Jerusalem, his parents find him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions, and the people are amazed at his understanding and answers; Mary scolds Jesus for going missing, to which Jesus replies that he must "be in his father's house" (Luke 2:41–52).

JOHN THE BAPTIST:

John the Baptist (late 1st century BC – 28–36 AD) was a wandering Jewish preacher in the early first century AD. John is revered as a major religious figure in Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. He is called a prophet by all of these traditions and is honored as a saint in many Christian traditions. John used baptism as the central symbol or sacrament of his pre-Messianic movement. Most scholars agree that John baptized Jesus and that some of Jesus' early followers had previously been followers of John. John the Baptist is also mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus.

John the Baptist's ministry was the dividing line between the Old and New Testaments. Israel had not seen a prophet for more than 400 years, when the last of the post-exilic prophets appeared during the return of the Jewish peoples to Jerusalem from their captivity in Mesopotamia. It was believed that when they would return prophecy to Jerusalem, the arrival of the expected Messiah would soon follow. With the appearance of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness, the Jewish people were obviously expectant that the age of the Messiah had arrived. Some even thought that John himself might be the Messiah. John's message was delivered with a great sense of urgency, striving to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. At the age of 30 years, Jesus of Nazareth was baptized by John, thus inaugurating his mission and ministry.

According to the New Testament, John anticipated a Messianic figure greater than himself. Christians commonly refer to John as the precursor or forerunner of Jesus, since John

announces Jesus' coming. John is also identified as the spiritual successor of the prophet Elijah. John was sentenced to death and subsequently beheaded by Herod Antipas sometime between 28 and 36 AD after John rebuked him for divorcing his wife, Phasaelis, and unlawfully taking Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip I.

The Gospel of Mark introduces John as a fulfilment of a prophecy from the Book of Isaiah (in fact, a merging of texts from Isaiah, Malachi and Exodus) about a messenger being sent ahead, and a voice crying out in the wilderness. Although Mark's Gospel implies that the arrival of John the Baptist is the fulfilment of a prophecy from the Book of Isaiah, the words quoted ("The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way' – 'a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." " [Mark 1:1-3]) are actually a composite of texts from Isaiah, Malachi and the Book of Exodus (Matthew and Luke drop the first part of the reference):



The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" – "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." "

[Mark 1:1-3]

See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.

[Ex. 23:20]

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

[Is. 40:3]

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

[Mal. 3:1]

John is described as wearing clothes of camel's hair and living on locusts and wild honey. John proclaims baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin and says another will come after him who will not baptize with water, but with the Holy Spirit. Jesus comes to John and is baptized by him in the river Jordan. The account describes how, as he emerges from the water, the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descends on him 'like a dove'. A voice from heaven then says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:1–8)

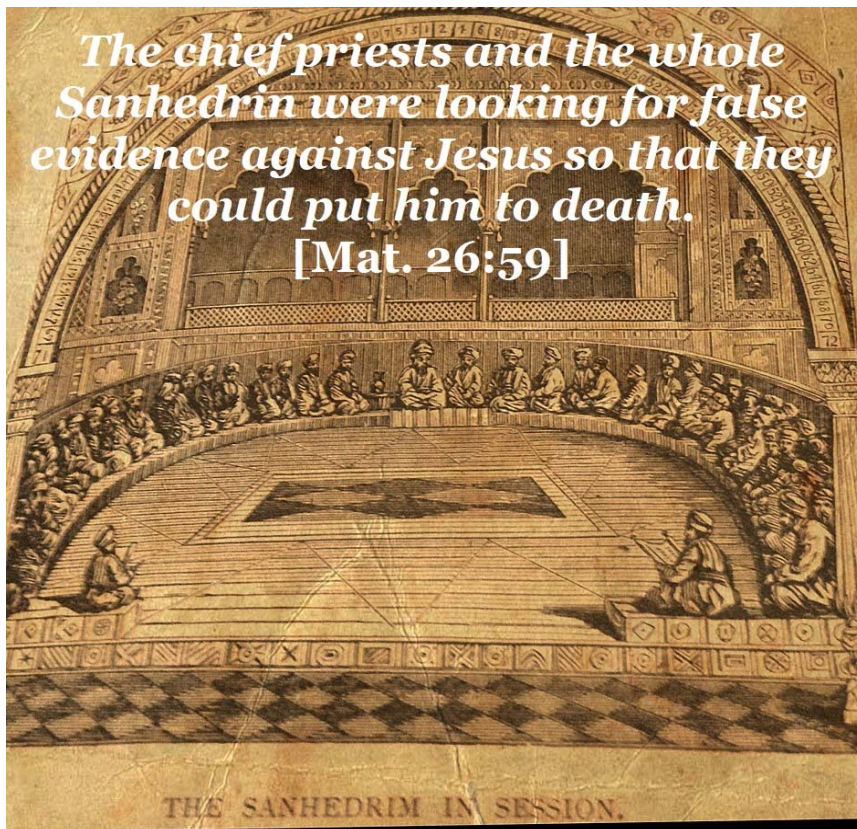
The Gospel of Luke adds an account of John's infancy, introducing him as the miraculous son of Zechariah, an old man, and his wife Elizabeth, who was past the menopause and

therefore unable to have children. According to this account, the birth of John was foretold by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, while he was performing his functions as a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. Since he is described as a priest of the course of Abijah and Elizabeth as one of the daughters of Aaron, this would make John a descendant of Aaron on both his father's and mother's side. On the basis of this account, the Catholic as well as the Anglican and Lutheran liturgical calendars placed the feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist on June 24, six months before Christmas. Elizabeth is described as a "relative" of Mary, the mother of Jesus in Luke 1:36. There is no mention of a family relationship between John and Jesus in the other Gospels. The many similarities between the Gospel of Luke story of the birth of John and the Old Testament account of the birth of Samuel suggest that Luke's account of the annunciation and birth of Jesus are modeled on that of Samuel.

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES:

The Pharisees were a religious and political party within Judaism in the New Testament period that was less fundamentally influential than the Sadducees, but they were the larger and more popular group. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who identified himself with the party of the Pharisees, wrote that there were 6,000 Pharisees during the time of Roman-Herodian rule. Like the Sadducees, they were extremely hostile to Jesus and his ministry. The Apostle Paul admitted that he was a Pharisee in Acts 23:6; 26:5 and in Philippians 3:5, and Nicodemus was a Pharisee (John 3:1; 7:45-52). Nicodemus is first mentioned when he visits Jesus one night to discuss Jesus' teachings (John 3:1-21). The second time Nicodemus is mentioned, he reminds his colleagues in the Sanhedrin that the law requires that a person be heard before being judged (John 7:50-51). Finally, Nicodemus appears after the Crucifixion of Jesus to provide the customary embalming spices and assists Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39-42).

According to John 7:50-51, Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling body of the Jews. Each city could have a Sanhedrin, which functioned as one of the "lower courts." Under Roman authority in the time of Jesus, the Jewish nation was allowed a measure of self-rule, and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the final court of appeals for matters regarding Jewish law and religion.



There were two classes of rabbinical courts called Sanhedrin, the Great Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin. A lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges was appointed to each city, but there was to be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts. In general usage, "The Sanhedrin" without qualifier normally refers to the Great Sanhedrin, which was composed of the Nasi, who functioned as head or representing president, and was a member of the court; the Av Beit Din or chief of the court, who was second to the Nasi; and sixty-nine general members (Mufli).

The Pharisees conceived Judaism as a religion centered upon the observance of the Mosaic Law, and they interpreted the obligations of the law in the most severe manner. As a group, the Pharisees accepted as inspired Scripture the Torah, the historical writings, the wisdom writings, and the works of the prophets. In other words, they accepted as canon all the 46 books of the Old Testament that are in our modern Catholic translations. They also accepted the Oral Tradition passed down by Moses to the elders. Israel under the Law, which the Pharisees conceived, was a theocracy and a national-religion. They were opposed to the rule of the Romans and their Herodian puppet kings, although they had little sympathy with the fanatic nationalists like the Zealots who espoused armed rebellion against Rome. As a group they stood in opposition to the Sadducees, but they were in close alliance with the scribes, the teachers and interpreters of the Law.

Because of their zeal for the holiness code (especially that of Leviticus), they emphasized purity and separation from those who did not observe their practices. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed in resurrection and in angels. As to free will, Josephus puts them between the fatalistic Essenes and the free-will Sadducees: they ascribed everything to "fate" and God's providence, yet they believed the power to do good or evil is principally in the power of men, although fate does cooperate in every action. In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees did not collaborate with Rome. Pharisees were generally considered to be the champions of the common people. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their legalism and pronounced seven curses against them in Matthew 23:13-36. Pharisaic Judaism alone survived the catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of the great Diaspora in 70 AD; these Pharisees were the founders of Rabbinical Judaism.

The Sadducees were a religious and political party within Judaism in the New Testament period. They were a small group, whose more conservative views greatly influenced the ruling priests. Unlike their rivals the Pharisees, they accepted the political status quo. Indeed, because of their influence and political clout, they worked hard to preserve it. With the ruling priests, they collaborated with Rome to manage Judea. In return for their cooperation (which consisted primarily of maintaining law and order and collecting the Roman tribute), Rome gave them preferential treatment and helped them hold on to their power.

The Sadducees were mostly composed of the priestly aristocracy and their dependents and supporters. The New Testament writers and the 1st century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus ascribe to them distinct beliefs different from the beliefs of the Pharisees. The Sadducees, who were also hostile to Jesus and his ministry, denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels and spirits (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:6-8). They accepted only the Torah, the written law, as authoritative and rejected the Pharisaic doctrine of the traditions of the elders (the Oral Tradition). The Sadducees also accepted Roman domination and many embraced Greek culture. They controlled the Law court known as the Sanhedrin. As a group, the Sadducees disappeared with the destruction of the temple and the priesthood in AD 70.

ZEALOTS AND ESSENES:

The Jewish historian Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea, but they were fewer in number than the Pharisees and the Sadducees and other major sects at the time. The Essenes lived in various cities but congregated in communal life dedicated to voluntary poverty, daily immersion, and asceticism (their priestly class practiced celibacy). The Essenes have gained fame in modern times as a result of the discovery of an extensive group of religious documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are commonly believed to be an Essene library. These documents preserve multiple copies of parts of the Hebrew Bible untouched from possibly as early as 300 BC until their discovery in 1946.

Josephus later gave a detailed account of the Essenes in *The Jewish-Roman War* (c. 75 AD), with a shorter description in *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94 AD) and *The Life of Flavius Josephus* (c. 97 AD). Claiming firsthand knowledge, he lists the Essenes as one of the three sects of Jewish philosophy alongside the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He relates the same information concerning piety, celibacy, the absence of personal property and of money, the belief in communality, and commitment to a strict observance of Sabbath. He further adds that the Essenes ritually immersed in water every morning, ate together after prayer, devoted themselves to charity and benevolence, forbade the expression of anger, studied the books of the elders, preserved secrets, and were very mindful of the names of the angels kept in their sacred writings.

Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* states that there were three main Jewish sects at the time of Jesus; the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The Zealots were a "fourth sect", founded by Judas of Galilee in the year 6 AD against Quirinius' tax reform, shortly after the Roman Empire declared what had most recently been the tetrarchy of Herod Archelaus to be a Roman province, and that they "agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord." (18.1.6) The Zealots were a political movement in First Century Second Temple Judaism, which sought to incite the people of Judea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms, most notably during the First Jewish–Roman War (66–70).

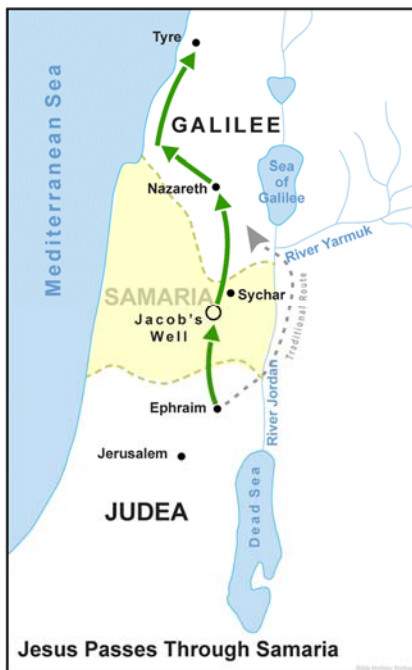
SAMARITANS:

In the New Testament, "Samaritan" is the name given to the inhabitants of the district of Samaria, north of Judea and south of the Galilee. To the Orthodox Jews and Galileans, the Samaritans were a heretical and schismatic group of spurious worshipers of the God of Israel, who were detested even more than pagans. As a people, they were mixed with descendants of foreign tribes the Assyrians had imported into the former northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC (see 2 Kings, chapter 17) who had accepted the worship of Yahweh along with their own foreign gods. Jews believed Samaritans were, at best, only partially Jewish. Samaritans claim they are Israelite descendants of the Northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

The Samaritans were a racially mixed society with Jewish and pagan ancestry. The Samaritans did not worship at the Temple in Jerusalem; instead they worshiped and made sacrifice to Yahweh at Mt. Gerizim in Samaria. They only accepted the first 5 books of Moses and their translation of these books had been altered to reflect their customs and beliefs. In chapter 4 of John's Gospel, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that she and her people worship what they do not understand (John 4:22). The Samaritans, however, believed that only the "Law of Moses" (more or less the Pentateuch) constituted true Scripture. Anything not written by Moses (whom they believed was "the light of the world") was rejected. Because they thus rejected much of Jewish law, non-Samaritan Jews thought Samaritans morally negligent.

Tensions between Jews and Samaritans can be traced back to the ninth century BC (after Solomon's death), when the northern tribes rebelled from the Jerusalem monarchy and formed their own kingdom. The two rival states, Israel and Judah, fought for centuries. Samaritan-Judean hostilities increased dramatically when Hyrcanus I, one of the Jewish kings whose dynasty had been founded by the Maccabean family (Hasmonaeans), destroyed the Samaritan temple at Mount Gerizim in 128 BC. The Samaritans exacted violent revenge, defiling the Jewish temple with human bones and attacking a festival-bound caravan of Galileans. The Jews responded in kind. The Samaritans fought back again. The Jews' hatred of Samaritans grew stronger over time.

To be called a Samaritan was a grievous insult, (Jesus was accused of being "a Samaritan and demon-possessed" - John 8:48). Some rabbis said that to eat the bread of Samaritans was to eat pork, or to marry a Samaritan was to lie with a beast. Rather than contaminate themselves by passing through Samaritan territory, Jews who were traveling from Judea to Galilee or vice versa would cross over the river Jordan, bypass Samaria by going through Transjordan, and cross over the river again as they neared their destination. The Samaritans also harbored antipathy toward the Jews (Luke 9:52-53).



When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." [John 4:8-10]

That the Samaritans were separated from and looked down upon by the Jews makes them important in the New Testament. Jesus indicated a new attitude must be taken toward the Samaritans when he passed through their towns instead of crossing the Jordan to avoid them (John 4:4-5), when he spoke with a Samaritan woman, contrary to Jewish custom (John 4:9), and when he said a time would come when worshiping in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerazim would not be important (John 4:21-24). When asked whom to regard as our neighbor, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan precisely because Samaritans were despised. The apostles recognized that in the early Church, Samaritans must be accepted as equal to Jews. Peter and John conducted a special mission to Samaria to confirm Samaritans who had already been baptized by Philip (Acts 8:14-17). This initiation of the Samaritans was a middle stage between the preaching of the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2) and the preaching of the gospel to full-blooded Gentiles (Acts 10).

JESUS, SON OF MAN AND SON OF GOD:

Jesus gave up his rights of divinity as Son of God by becoming human. In his incarnation, he voluntarily became Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man. Jesus was subjected to place, time, and mortality. He did not give up his divine power when he became human, but he did set aside his glory and his rights of authority; he limited his power and his knowledge. What made Jesus' humanity unique was his freedom from sin. Jesus lived his whole life in perfect submission to his Father's will. In Jesus, we can see every attribute of God's character. The incarnation was the act of the pre-existent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, he became human – Jesus of Nazareth. He did not give up his deity to become human, but he set aside his glory and power. In submission to the Father's will, he constrained his divine prerogatives.

In Christology, the concept that the Christ is the Logos (i.e., "God's Word") has been important in establishing the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and his position as God the Son in the Trinity as set forth in the Chalcedonian Creed which was made during the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451. This derives from the opening of the Gospel of John, commonly translated into English as: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the original Greek, Logos is used for "Word," and in theological discourse, this is often left in its English transliterated form, "Logos". The pre-existence of Christ refers to the doctrine of the personal existence of Christ before his earthly conception. One of the relevant Bible passages is John 1:1-18 where, in the Trinitarian view, Christ is identified with a pre-existent divine hypostasis called the Logos or Word. This doctrine is reiterated in John 17:5 when Jesus refers to the glory which he had with the Father "before the world was" during the "farewell discourse". John 17:24 also refers to the Father loving Jesus "before the foundation of the world".

***"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"
(which means "God with us").
[Mat. 1:23]***

God is God, Jesus is God:

I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.
[Is. 45:5]

And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.
[Is. 45:21]

But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.”
[Heb. 1:8]

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
[John 20:28]

God is Light, Jesus is Light:

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?
[Ps. 27:1]

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.
[1John 1:5]

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
[John 1:4,5]

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
[John 8:12]

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.
[John 12:46]

Every Knee Will Bow Before God, Every Knee Will Bow Before Jesus:

Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.
[Is. 45:23]

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.
[Phil. 2:9,10]

God Forgives Sins, Jesus Forgives Sins:

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins.

[Ps. 103:2,3]

Who can forgive sins but God alone?

[Mark 2:7]

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

[Mark 2:5]

God Never Changes, Jesus Never Changes:

I the Lord do not change.

[Mal. 3:6]

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

[Heb. 13:8]

God is King, Christ is King:

For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.

[Ps. 47:7]

The Lord is our king; it is he who will save us.

[Is. 33:22]

Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”

[John 12:14]

The Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings.

[Rev. 17:14]

God is the Rock, Christ is the Rock:

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just.

[Deut. 32:4]

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock.
[Ps. 18:2]

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation.
[Ps. 1,2]

They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.
[1Cor. 10:4]

God is the Shepherd, Christ is the Shepherd:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
[Ps. 23:1]

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
[John 10:11]

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.
[Heb.13:20]

God is First and Last, Jesus is First and Last:

I, the Lord—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.
[Is. 41:4]

I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.
[[Is.44:6]

I am he; I am the first and I am the last.
[Is. 48:12]

I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.
[Rev. 1:8]

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.”
[Rev. 21:6]

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the

Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.
[Rev. 1:17,18]

Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
[Rev. 22:12,13]

God Receives Glory, Jesus Receives Glory:

I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another.
[Is. 42:8]

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.
[John 17:5]

God is Judge of the Earth, Jesus is Judge of the Earth:

Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?
[Gen 18:25]

Rise up, Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve.
[Ps. 94:2]

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.
[John 5:22]

God is I Am, Jesus is I Am:

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.'"
[Ex. 3:14]

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"
[John 8:58]

God Alone Receives Worship, Jesus Alone Receives Worship:

Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.
[Mat. 4:10]

When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

[Heb 1:6]

God is Our Only Savior, Jesus is Our Only Savior:

I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.

[Is.43:11]

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[Joel 2:32]

We know that this man really is the Savior of the world.

[John 4:42]

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[Rom.10:13]

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

[1John 4:14]

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[2Pet.3:18]

God is Creator, Jesus is Creator:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

[Gen. 1:1]

For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it.

[Is. 45:18]

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

[John 1:1-3]

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

[1Col. 1:15,16]

***In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens
are the work of your hands.***

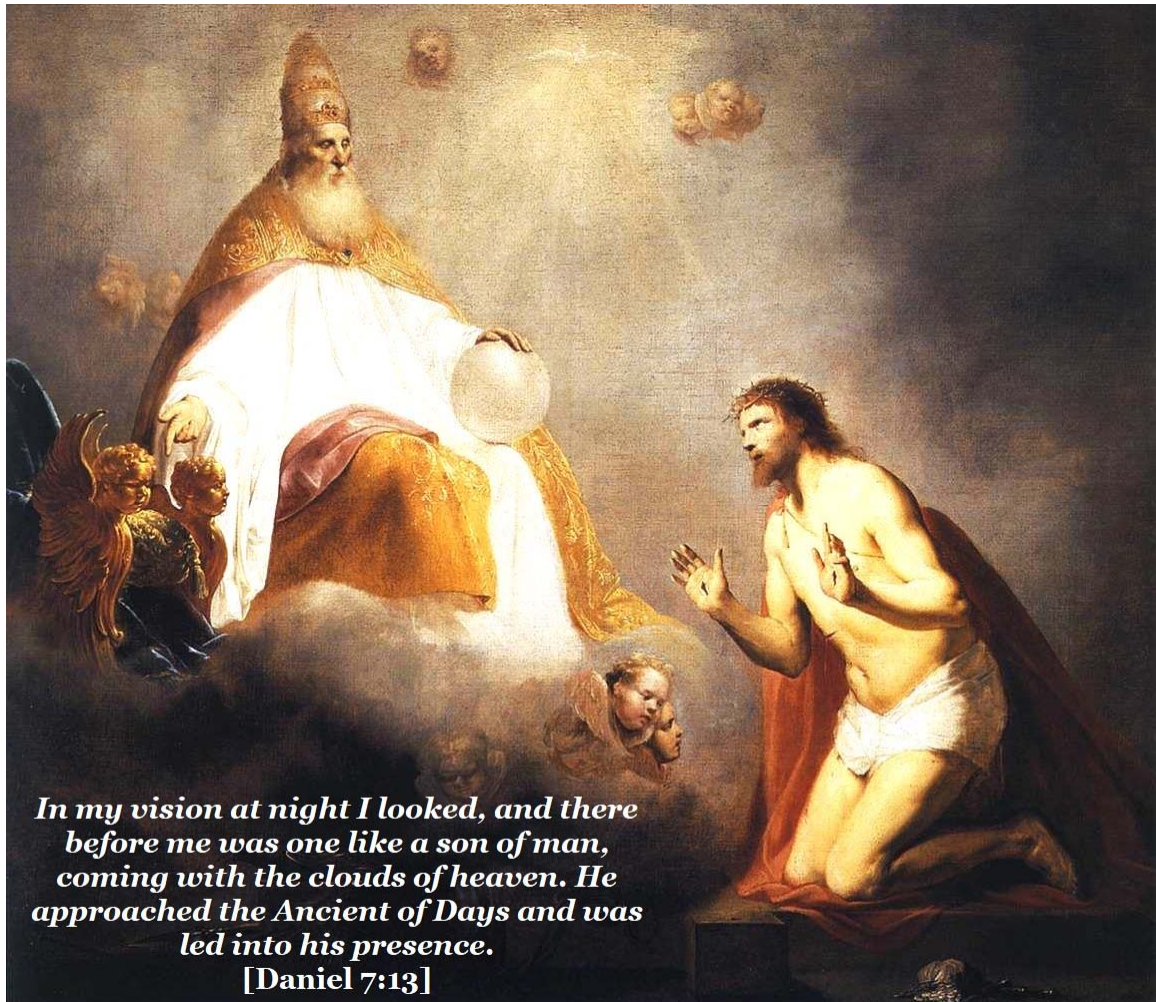
[Heb. 1:10]

Non-Trinitarian views question this aspect of personal pre-existence or the aspect of Jesus' divinity, or both. Following the Apostolic Age, from the second century forward, several controversies developed about how the human and divine are related within the person of Jesus. Eventually, the concept of a "hypostatic union" was decreed, namely that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. However, differences among Christian denominations continued thereafter. The Chalcedonian Definition was adopted in 451 AD at the Council of Chalcedon in Asia Minor. That council was the fourth of the first seven Ecumenical Councils, which are accepted by Chalcedonian churches (Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and most Protestant churches). It is the first Council not recognized by any of the Oriental Orthodox churches, which may be classified as non-Chalcedonian. This definition defines that Christ is acknowledged in two natures, which "come together into one person and one hypostasis".

The formal definition of 'two natures' in Christ was understood by the critics of the council at the time, and is understood by many historians and theologians today, to side with western and Antiochene Christology and to diverge from the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria, who always stressed that Christ is 'one'. However, a modern analysis of the sources of the creed and a reading of the acts, or proceedings, of the council show that the bishops considered Cyril the great authority and that even the language of 'two natures' derives from him.

"Son of man" is an expression in many sayings of Jesus in Christian writings, including the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation. In John 9 we are told of Jesus' interaction with the person whom he previously healed of blindness. Upon learning of his troubles with the Judean authorities Jesus says: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answers, "Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him?" Jesus says to him, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man says, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:35-38)

In the Christian scriptures, Jesus uses this reference for himself more than Son of God. The attributes given to "the Son of Man" in the Christian scriptures seem to correspond with those found in the Book of Daniel of the Hebrew scriptures Daniel 7:13-14 describes how the "Ancient of Days" gives dominion over the earth to "one like a son of man." This passage in Daniel was written in Biblical Aramaic.



The Book of Enoch, a Jewish pre-Christian literary work, testifies that among Jews even before Jesus there were already well-developed notions of the Son of Man. They line up quite well with the figure of the gospel's Son of Man. The First book of Enoch is one of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, a composition attributed to a personage from the Hebrew Bible, but not included in either the Jewish or the Christian Bible. It contains a description of the Son of Man as pre-existent:

And there I saw the One to Whom belongs the time before time, and His head was white like wool. With Him was another being, whose countenance had the appearance of a man, and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. I asked the angel who went with me concerning that son of and who he was, and whence he was, and why he went with the One to Whom belongs the time before time.

He answered and said to me: "This is the son of man who has righteousness, with whom dwells righteousness, and who reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of the spirits has chosen him, and whose lot

***has the pre-eminence before the Lord of the spirits in uprightness for ever.
This son of man whom you have seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty
from their seats and the strong from their thrones, and shall loosen the reins
of the strong and break the teeth of the sinners.”***

[Enoch 46:1-4]

Jesus, The “Finger of God”

In John 8:3-11, the Jewish scribes and Pharisees bring a woman who had been taken in the act of adultery before Jesus for judgment. Standing around him, they desire his ruling on the affair with insidious intent. The Romans had modelled their laws in Judea according to the jurisprudence of Rome, and in particular they had minimized the severity of the punishment of an adulteress. If Jesus should say that the Law of Moses ought to be executed upon this adulteress requiring her to be stoned to death, the Pharisees hoped the people would stone her immediately, which would afford them an opportunity of accusing him before the Roman Governor as being guilty of sedition. But, if Jesus should determine that the protocol practiced by the Romans in such cases should take precedence, they were resolved to present him to the people as one who made void the Mosaic Law out of submissive compliance to their heathen masters. Their craft and wickedness Jesus fully knew, and the Master reacted to these Pharisaic hypocrites accordingly.

According to the Mosaic traditions of Biblical law, whenever someone was caught in adultery, both the man and the woman were to be brought to the temple gates and accordingly accused. Witnesses should be gathered to confirm that adultery had indeed been committed; then there was a certain ceremony that would be done in order to bring righteous judgment. However, in this circumstance they brought only the woman unaccompanied by appropriate witnesses. This was in direct violation of the of the Mosaic Law of God. The attending priest was then required to stoop down and write the law that had been broken, along with the names of the accused, in the dust of the floor of the Temple which Jesus may have done where he was.



***But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.
[John 8:6]***

***The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.
[John 8:3-6]***

As part of his response for writing on the ground with his finger, we are reminded what Jesus stated in the Gospel of Luke when he avowed, “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luke 11:19). The finger of God is a picture of omnipotence, of unlimited power in justice and judgment. In this case, Jesus is acting in justice with the authority of his divinity, hence he is writing with the finger of God.

***When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.
[Exodus 31:18]***

These Scribes and Pharisees had abrogated the Law, bringing the woman only with no recorded witnesses. They continue with their improper accusations. So, Jesus stands up

(after plainly demonstrating they were violating the Law themselves) and says, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.
[John 8:7,8]

Now acting with divine authority, Jesus may have written down the names of the accusers who clearly were forsaking the heart and the letter of the Law. He writes with the finger of God again. Which one of them has not transgressed the judicial Law of Moses in bringing this adulteress to judgment in full neglect of these commandments of God? There were none present who were not involved in this sordid affair - not one!

Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water.
[Jer. 17:13]

These accusers were defeated in the transgressions of their purpose, and one by one they all left.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."
[John 8:9-11]

JESUS' GOSPEL:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"
[Mark 1:14,15]

Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of heaven is an outgrowth of dynamic love that is first realized by recognizing the fact of God's sovereignty in the hearts of men. This recognition generates belief in the truth of sonship with this selfsame God, and this belief develops the saving faith that every desiring mortal being can effectively do the will of God - to be like God, to become perfect. The kingdom of heaven is founded on love, proclaimed in mercy, and established in unselfish service. The kingdom of God exists in the hearts of mortal man, but when this kingdom establishes a brotherhood that encompasses the world, then the God's love has attained sovereignty.

The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man present the paradox of the part and the whole on the level of humankind. God loves each individual as an individual child in the heavenly family. Yet God thus loves every individual; he is no “respector of persons”, and the universality of his love brings into being a relationship of the whole, the universal brotherhood. Every child of God shares the fatherhood of God, and God loves each of his children alike, and that affection is not less than true, holy, divine, unlimited, eternal, and unique. The brotherhood of man is, after all, predicated on the recognition of the fatherhood of God.



***You have one
Teacher, and you
are all brothers.
And do not call
anyone on earth
'father,' for you
have one Father,
and he is in
heaven.
[Mat. 23:8,9]***

The experience of personal relationships in every mortal life possesses the greatest of all values. Each contact of a personal nature is an end unto itself. Love is simply the desire to do good to others, and this divine and inner urge of life is founded on understanding, nurtured by unselfish service, and perfected in wisdom. By necessity, true love must be dynamic. It must not be simply reciprocated to only those who love you. Divine love is always outgoing in its manifestation. It seeks ever to satisfy those hungry for love, for it cannot be self-contained. The greater the expressed hunger for love, the more resourcefully does divine love strive to satisfy such need.

All true love is from God, and man receives the divine affection as he himself bestows this love upon his fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling, and always moving. Man can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within his heart. The Father's love can become real to mortal man only by passing through that man's soul as he in turn bestows this love upon his fellows. The great circuit of love is from the Father, through sons, and to our brothers and sisters.

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
[Mat. 6:9]

As a crude analogy, we might think of ourselves as water faucets. The love of the Father is like the thirst-quenching water that, when we taste of it, we hold onto it dearly within our very being. However, if we do not let go of this refreshing water by letting it flow freely through us and outward to our parched brothers and sisters, then we can be satisfied with only a miniscule amount of this revitalizing water. If we can be inspired to let go of this precious water, it will flow profusely through our very being, and then our fill will be immeasurable. Such is our gift for being our Father's conduit of love.



For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
[Rom. 8:14-17]

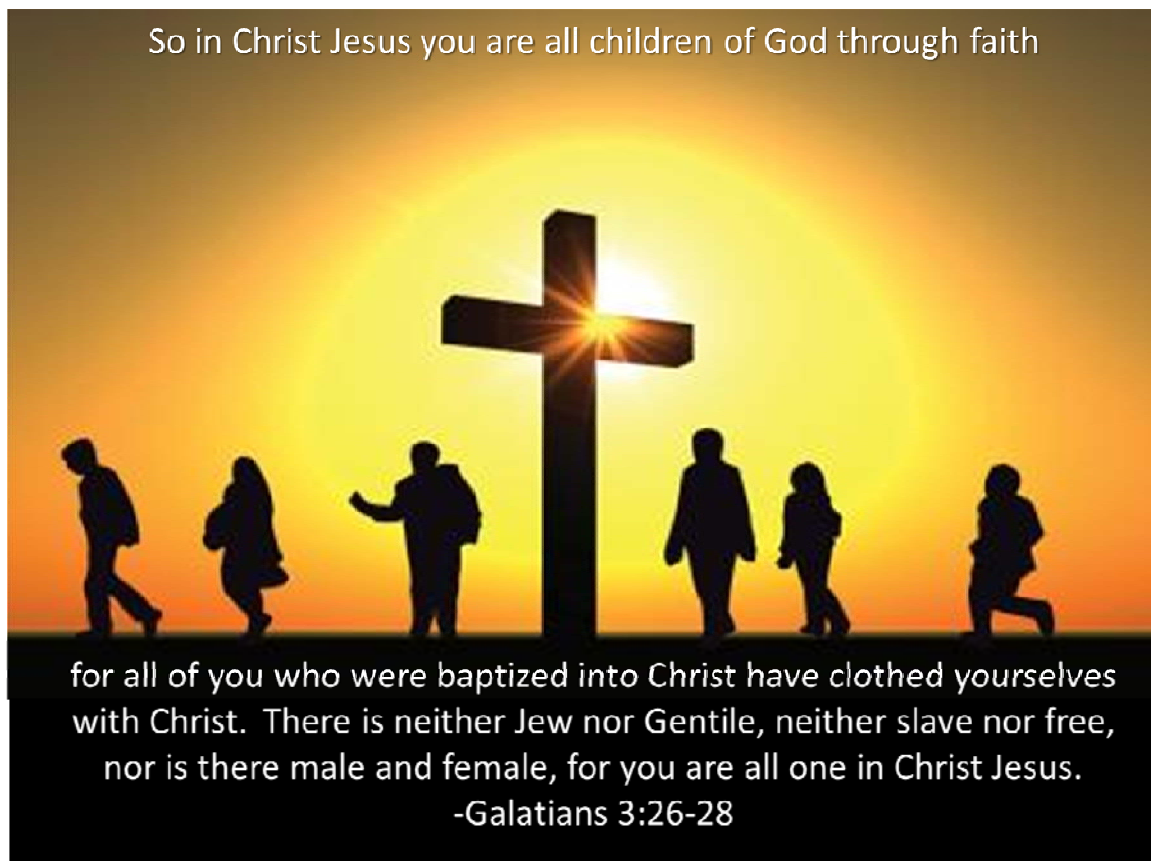
Love gives and craves for attention. It seeks for such understanding fellowship as exists naturally between parent and child. A dynamic love begins with that inward and spiritual fellowship with God as Father, and this relationship very directly manifests itself in the outpouring of loving ministry for one's fellow man. Because of this genuine personal experience with a personal and loving God, one gains the consciousness of being a member of a growing family, and this insight propels this new family member into the active and unselfish service for an ever-enlarging brotherhood.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.
[John 1:12,13]

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.
[2Cor. 6:18]

The greatest love the world has ever known is the love of Jesus. He loved man so much that he was willing to lay down his life for their better good. The love of Jesus is the highest ideal of love that we can emulate in our ministry for the welfare of our brothers and sisters. This sacred love is without qualification - it cares not whether the recipient is worthy of this love. It only desires the rehabilitation, healing, and salvation of all men through unselfish service in the devotion of love.

The cross forever shows that the attitude of Jesus toward sinners was neither condemnation nor condonation, but rather eternal and loving salvation. Jesus' death on the cross exemplifies a love which is sufficiently strong and divine to forgive sin and swallow up all evil-doing. Jesus disclosed to this world a higher quality of righteousness than unmitigated justice - mere technical right and wrong. The Master's love implies rehabilitation, eternal survival. It is altogether proper to speak of salvation as redemption if you mean this eternal rehabilitation.



Christianity today has glorified Jesus as the Christ, our savior and the Messianic anointed one from God, but it has largely neglected the Master's personal gospel: the fatherhood of

God and the universal brotherhood of all men. By faith in the fatherhood of God, you may enter the kingdom of heaven, thus becoming the sons of God. The ultimate goal of human progress is the reverent recognition of the good news of the Father's kingdom – the fatherhood of God and the loving materialization of the brotherhood of man. With the soul-consciousness of the fatherhood of God and the consequent recognition of the brotherhood of man, there is discovered a new and far more beautiful interpretation of this basic rule of life – to love one another as you would be loved. Jesus established this teaching as the cornerstone of his personal religion. The worship of God and the service of man became the sum and substance of his religion. Jesus took the best of the Jewish religion and translated it to a worthy setting in the new teachings of the gospel of the kingdom.

The kingdom, to the Jews, was the Israelite community; to the gentiles it became the Christian Church. To Jesus the kingdom was the sum of those individuals who had confessed their faith in the fatherhood of God, thereby declaring their wholehearted dedication to the doing of the will of God, thus becoming members of the spiritual brotherhood of man. Jesus taught that service to one's fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers. Salvation should be taken for granted by those who believe in the fatherhood of God. The believer's chief concern should not be the selfish desire for personal salvation but rather the unselfish urge to love and, therefore, serve one's fellows even as Jesus loved and served mortal men.

***He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
[Mark 16:15]***

Jesus' bestowal, death and resurrection should convince all men to know that they are the children of God, but such knowledge will not suffice if they fail personally to faith-grasp the saving truth that they are the living spirit sons of the eternal Father. The gospel of the kingdom is concerned with the love of the Father and the service of his children on earth. Salvation is the free gift of God and is bestowed upon all who accept it by faith. Still, there must follow the experience of bearing the fruit of this re-born life as it is lived in the flesh. If man is your brother, he is even more than your neighbor, whom the Father requires you to love as yourself. Your brother, being of your own family, you will not only love with a family affection, but you will also serve as you would serve yourself. And you will thus love and serve your brother because you, being brethren in Christ, are compelled to do so. But his followers did not long follow his instructions, for soon after Jesus' death and resurrection they departed from his teachings and began to build the early church around the miraculous concepts and the glorified memories of his divine human personality.



***“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
[John 13:34]***

Jesus' apostles went forth, endowed with power from on high, preaching glad tidings to the people - even salvation through Jesus - but in their religious fervor, they focused their message on the miraculous events of Jesus' death and resurrection in association with the experience of believer-fellowship with the risen and glorified Christ. And when all of this is taken into consideration, it is not difficult to understand how these men came to preach a new gospel primarily focusing on the amazing circumstances of Jesus' life and marginalizing Jesus' personal teachings regarding the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. Christian theology describes the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ not as a new concept, but one that has been foretold throughout the Old Testament and was prophetically preached even at the time of the Fall of Man as contained in Genesis

***By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.
[1Cor. 15:2-5]***

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:



Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."
[Luke 17:20,21]

The kingdom of God (and its related form kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew) is one of the key elements of the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. Drawing on Old Testament teachings, the Christian characterization of the relationship between God and humanity inherently involves the notion of the kingship of God. The Old Testament refers to "God the Judge of all" and the notion that all humans will eventually "be judged" is an essential element of Christian teachings. Building on a number of New Testament passages, the Nicene Creed indicates that the task of judgment is assigned to Jesus.

The New Testament is written against the backdrop of Second Temple Judaism. The view of the kingdom developed during that time included a restoration of Israel to a Davidic Kingdom and the intervention of God in history via the Danielic Son of Man. The coming of the kingdom of God involved God finally taking back the reins of history, which he had allowed to slacken as pagan Empires had ruled the nations. Most Jewish sources imagine a restoration of Israel and either a destruction of the nations or a gathering of the nations to obedience to the one true God.

Jesus stands firmly in this tradition. His association of his own person and ministry with the "coming of the kingdom" indicates that he perceives that God's great intervention in history has arrived, and that he is the agent of that intervention. His suffering and death, however,

seem to cast doubt upon this (how could God's appointed king be killed?) but his resurrection affirms his claim with the ultimate proof of only God having resurrection power over death. The claim includes his exaltation to the right hand of God and establishes him as "the Son of the king." Jesus' predictions of his return make it clear that God's kingdom is not yet fully realized according to inaugurated eschatology but in the meantime the good news that forgiveness of sins is available through his name is proclaimed to the nations. Thus, the assumed mission of the Church begins, and fills the time between the initial coming of the kingdom, and its ultimate consummation with the "final judgment".

Christian interpretations or usage of the term "kingdom of God" regularly make use of this historical framework and are often consistent with the Jewish hope of a Messiah, the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, his return, and the rise of the Church in history. A question characteristic to the central theme of most interpretations is whether the "kingdom of God" has been instituted because of the appearance of Jesus Christ or whether it is yet to be instituted; whether this kingdom is present, future or is omnipresent simultaneously in both the present and future existence.

The heart of Jesus' teachings centers around the theme of the kingdom of God wherein God rules within the hearts of mankind. This expression is found in sixty-one separate sayings in the Synoptic Gospels. Counting parallels to these passages, the expression occurs over eighty-five times. It also occurs twice in John (3:3,5). It is found in such key places as the preaching of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt 3:2); Jesus' earliest announcement, "The time has come... The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15; cf. Matt 4:17; Luke 4:42-43); the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, "your kingdom come" (Mat. 6:10); in the Beatitudes, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5:3 Matthew 5:10); at the Last Supper, "I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25); and in many of Jesus' parables (Mat. 13:24 Mat. 13:44 Mat. 13:45 Mat. 13:47; Mark 4:26 Mark 4:30; Luke 19:11).

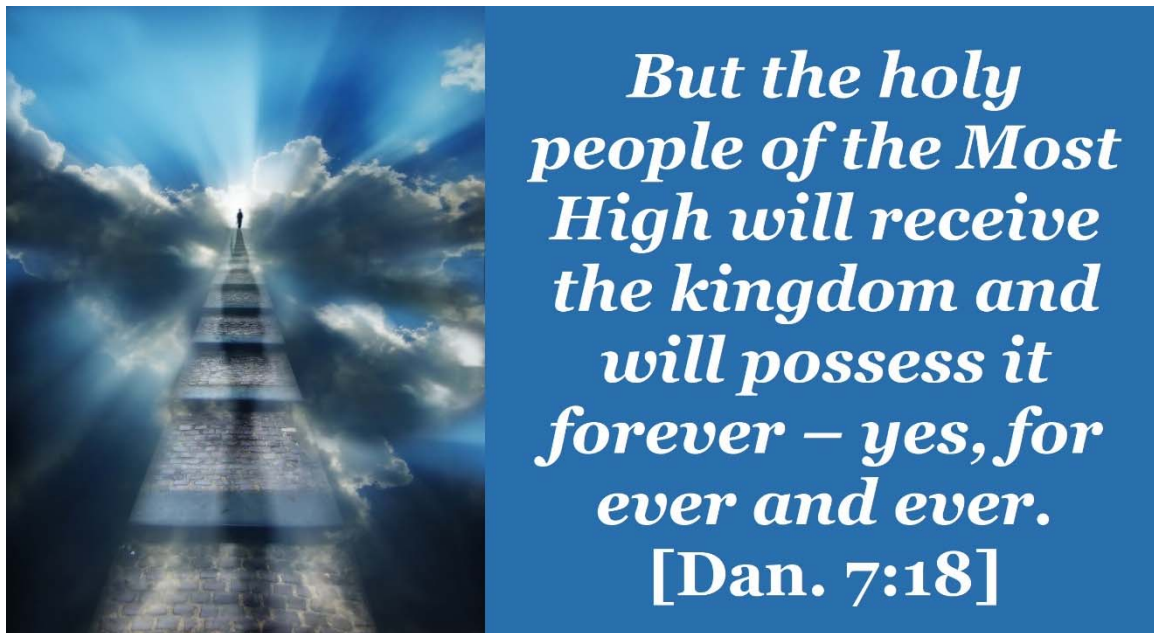
It has been noted that Matthew 3:2 is the first of twenty-nine references to the "kingdom of heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew. The gospels of Luke and Mark tend to prefer the term "kingdom of God." That Matthew uses the word heaven is often seen as a reflection of the sensibilities of the Jewish audience. To the Jews of Palestine, the phrase "kingdom of heaven" had but one meaning: an absolutely righteous state in which God (through the Messiah) would rule the nations of earth in perfection of power just as he ruled in heaven. The word heaven has an important role in Matthew's theology and links the phrase especially to the Father in heaven, which Matthew frequently uses to refer to God. The kingdom of God represents the earthly domain that Jesus' opponents such as Pharisees thought they resided in, while the kingdom of heaven represents the truer spiritual domain of Jesus and his re-born disciples.

The consciousness of the spirit domination of a human life is presently attended by an increasing exhibition of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit in the life reactions of such a spirit led mortal being, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23). Such spirit-guided and

divinely illuminated mortals, while they yet tread the lowly paths of toil and in human faithfulness perform the duties of their earthly assignments, have already begun to discern the lights of eternal life as they glimmer on the faraway shores of another world; already have they begun to comprehend the reality of that inspiring and comforting truth.

“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
[Rom. 14:17]

Daniel fully understood these matters. He said, “the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth” (Dan. 4:17):



The kingdom of heaven is neither a social nor economic order; it is an exclusively spiritual brotherhood of God-knowing individuals. This divine government is founded on the fact of divine sovereignty – and God is spirit. Since God is spirit, this kingdom is spiritual. The kingdom of heaven is neither material nor merely intellectual; it is a spiritual relationship between God and man. John the Baptist’s conviction grew deeper and deeper that the time was fast approaching when the old order was to end; that he was to become the herald of the approach of a new age, “the kingdom of heaven.” It seemed to this rugged and noble child of nature that the world was ripe for the end of the age of man and the dawn of the new and divine age - the kingdom of heaven. John had thought out the method of proclaiming the new age, the kingdom of God; he settled that he was to become the herald of the Messiah

The coming kingdom was not of this world; the world was approaching its certain end, and “a new heaven and a new earth” were to usher in the establishment of the kingdom of God.

This kingdom was to be an everlasting dominion, sin was to be ended, and the citizens of the new kingdom were to become immortal in their enjoyment of this endless bliss. This kingdom which Jesus declared is not a reign of power and plenty. The kingdom of heaven is not a matter of meat and drink but rather a life of progressive righteousness and increasing joy in the perfecting service of my Father who is in heaven. John came preaching repentance to prepare for the kingdom; Jesus came proclaiming faith, the gift of God, as the price of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He pointed out that faith alone may pass us through its portals, but we must bring forth the fruit of his Father's spirit if we would continue to ascend in the progressive life of the divine fellowship.

We are to become ambassadors of the Father's kingdom; we thereby become a class of people separate and distinct from all other men on earth. We are not now as men among men but as the enlightened citizens of another and heavenly country among the ignorant creatures of this dark world. It is not enough that we live as we were before this status, but henceforth, we must live as those who have tasted the glories of a better life and have been sent back to earth as ambassadors of the heavenly Father of a new and better world. Of the citizens of the heavenly kingdom, more is required than of the citizens of the earthly rule. The burden of Jesus' message was:

- The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- By faith in the fatherhood of God you may enter the kingdom of heaven, thus becoming the sons of God.
- Love is the rule of living within the kingdom - supreme devotion to God while loving your neighbor as yourself.
- Obedience to the will of the Father, yielding the fruit of the spirit in one's personal life, is the law of the kingdom.

MINISTRY OF JESUS:

The Synoptic Gospels depict two distinct geographical settings for Jesus' ministry. The first takes place in Galilee, north of Judea and Samaria, where Jesus conducts a successful ministry; and the second reveals Jesus being rejected and killed when he travels to Jerusalem in Judea. The Gospel of Luke (3:23) states that Jesus was "about 30 years of age" at the start of his ministry. A chronology of Jesus typically has the date of the start of his ministry estimated at around 27–29 AD and the end in the range 30–36 AD. Often referred to as "rabbi" (teacher), Jesus preaches his message orally. Notably, Jesus forbids those who recognize him as the Messiah to speak of it, including people he heals and demons he exorcises (the "Messianic Secret"). The Gospel of John depicts Jesus' ministry as largely taking place in and around Jerusalem, rather than in Galilee; and Jesus' divine identity is openly proclaimed and immediately recognized.

Timeline of Jesus

(Historians generally assume Jesus was born between 6 - 4 BC)

- The angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth.
- Birth of Jesus.
- The infant Jesus is visited in Bethlehem by the Three Wise Men and the Shepherds.
- Herod orders the "Massacre of the Innocents", the killing of all male children in Bethlehem aged two years and under.
- Census of Quirinius. The census or enrollment, which, according to Luke 2:1, was the occasion of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem where Jesus was born, is connected with a decree of Augustus embracing the Greek-Roman world.
- Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus flee to Egypt.
- Death of Herod the Great.
- Three sons of Herod divide up rule of Palestine under Roman Authority:
 - Archelaus rules Judea and Samaria.
 - Herod Antipas rules Galilee and Perea.
 - Herod Philip rules Ituraea and Tracheitis.
- Birth of John the Baptist - John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:36)

(Timeline of Jesus according to his age)

- **Age 12** Jesus visits the Temple in Jerusalem.
- **Age 12 - 30** Jesus works as a carpenter in Nazareth.

(Timeline of Jesus aged 30)

- Jesus is baptized in the River Jordan in Judea by John the Baptist.
- Jesus in the Wilderness – Judea.
- Jesus hails Andrew, Simon, Philip, And Nathaniel – Bethabara.
- Jesus turns water into wine, drives moneymakers from the temple – Cana, Jerusalem.
- Nighttime visit Of Nicodemus, Jesus enlightens him - Jerusalem.
- Jesus and the Woman of Samaria – Samaria, Sychar.
- Miracle at Cana in Galilee.
- Pool of Bethesda – Jerusalem.
- Jesus reads in the Nazareth Synagogue – Nazareth, Capernaum.

(Timeline of Jesus aged 31)

- Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, chooses the first four Apostles – Galilee, Capernaum.
- Sermon on the Mount - near Capernaum.
- Miracle of the leper - by Lake Gennesaret, Capernaum.
- Matthew is called by Jesus – Capernaum.
- Jesus in the cornfield on the Sabbath - Capernaum.
- Jesus and the twelve disciples - near Capernaum.
- Jesus and the imprisonment of John the Baptist - Galilee, near Cana.
- Jesus and the multitudes at the shore – Capernaum, Sea of Galilee.
- Jairus' daughter healed – Capernaum.

(Timeline of Jesus aged 32)

- Jesus teaches in the synagogue – Nazareth. Capernaum.
- Mission of the twelve disciples – Nazareth, Capernaum.
- Herod seeks out Jesus – Decapolis, Bethsaida.
- Miracle of the loaves and fishes – Bethsaida.
- Jesus walks on the water - Sea of Galilee. Gennesaret.
- Jesus and the Pharisees – Capernaum.
- Jesus and the woman of Canaan – Phoenicia, Decapolis
- Feeding the multitude – Decapolis, Bethsaida
- Jesus foretells his own fate - Caesarea Philippi.
- The Transfiguration - on, and near, Mt. Hermon.
- Jesus foretells his death and resurrection – Galilee, Capernaum.
- Feast of the Tabernacle – Jerusalem, Galilee.
- Jesus questioned by the Jews - Jerusalem.
- The Lord's Prayer – Perea.
- Sermon to the innumerable multitude - Perea.
- Journey To Jerusalem – Perea, Bethany.

(Timeline of Jesus aged 33)

- Jesus and Lazarus – Bethany, Perea.
- Jesus journeys through Samaria and Galilee.
- Jesus tells of imminent betrayal – Perea.
- Miracle of the two blind beggars – Jericho.
- The Mount of Olives – Bethpage, Jerusalem.
- In the Temple – Jerusalem.
- Mary and Martha - Bethany.
- The Passover Supper – Bethany, Jerusalem.
- The Last Supper – Jerusalem.
- Garden at Gethsemane - Mount of Olives, Gethsemane.
- Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus – Gethsemane, Jerusalem.
- The trial of Jesus - Jerusalem.
- Pontius Pilate - Jerusalem.
- The Crucifixion – Jerusalem, Golgotha, Calvary.
- The Sepulcher – Jerusalem.
- The Resurrection – Jerusalem.
- Doubting Thomas – Emmaus, Jerusalem.
- Jesus after the Resurrection - Sea of Galilee.
- The Ascension – Galilee, Mt. Olivet, Bethany.

In the Christian gospels, the ministry of Jesus begins with his baptism in the countryside of Roman Judea and Transjordan, near the river Jordan, and ends in Jerusalem, following the Last Supper with his disciples. John 1:28 specifies the location where John was baptizing as "Bethany beyond the Jordan". This is not the village Bethany just east of Jerusalem, but the town Bethany, also called Bethabara, in Perea. Perea is the province east of the Jordan,

across the southern part of Samaria, and although the New Testament does not mention Perea by name, John 3:23 implicitly refers to it again when it states that John was baptizing in Enon near Salim, "because there was much water there".

The initial Galilean ministry begins in Matthew 8 when after his baptism, Jesus returns to Galilee from the Judean Desert after rebuffing the temptation of Satan. The temptation of Christ is detailed in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. According to these texts, after being baptized by John the Baptist, Jesus fasts for 40 days and nights in the Judean Desert. During this time, Satan appears to Jesus and tries to tempt him. Jesus refuses each temptation, the Devil then departs, and Jesus returns to Galilee to begin his ministry. Mark does not provide details, but in Matthew and Luke "the tempter" or "the devil" tempts Jesus to:

- Make bread out of stones to relieve his own hunger.
- Jump from a pinnacle and rely on angels to break his fall. The narrative of both Luke and Matthew have Satan quote Psalm 91:11–12 to indicate that God had promised this assistance.
- Worship Satan in return for all the kingdoms of the world.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews also refers to Jesus having been tempted in every way that we are, except without sin. Mark's account is very brief, merely noting the event. Matthew and Luke describe the temptations by recounting the details of the conversations between Jesus and Satan. Since the elements that are in Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark, are mostly pairs of quotations rather than detailed narration, many scholars believe these extra details originate in the "Q" Document. The temptation of Christ is not explicitly mentioned in the Gospel of John, but in this gospel, Jesus does refer to the Devil, "the prince of this world", having no power over him.

The early teachings of Jesus result in his rejection at his hometown when in Luke 4:16–30 Jesus says in a synagogue: "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" and the people reject him. In this early period, Jesus' reputation begins to spread throughout Galilee. In Mark 1:21–28 and Luke 4:31–37, Jesus goes to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, where people are "astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority", which is followed by healing the mother of Peter's wife. The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long and 7 miles wide and 150 feet deep. Sudden storms can appear over the surrounding mountains with little warning, stirring the water into violent 20-foot waves. This is caused by air turbulence from air descending down of the surrounding mountains and highlands. Luke 5:1–11 includes the first miraculous "draught of fishes" episode in which Jesus tells Peter, "now on you will catch men". Peter leaves his net and, along with him, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, follows Jesus as disciples thereafter.



In this early period of ministry, Jesus preaches around Galilee and recruits his first disciples in his commissioning of the twelve Apostles who begin to travel with him. In Matthew and Mark, despite Jesus only briefly requesting that they join him, Jesus' first four apostles, who were fishermen, are described as immediately consenting, and abandoning their nets and boats to do so (Matthew 4:18–22, Mark 1:16–20). In John, Jesus' first two apostles were Andrew and his brother Simon (Peter), disciples of John the Baptist. The Baptist sees Jesus and calls him the Lamb of God; the two hear this and follow Jesus. After this episode in John, the next two Apostles to follow Jesus were Philip and Nathaniel.

This period of Jesus' Galilean ministry includes the "sermon on the Mount", one of the major discourses of Jesus in Matthew, and the "sermon on the plain" in the Gospel of Luke. The sermon on the Mount, which covers chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the Gospel of Matthew, is the first of the five discourses of Matthew and is the longest piece of teaching from Jesus in the New Testament. It encapsulates many of the moral teachings of Jesus and includes the "Beatitudes" and the widely recited "Lord's Prayer". The events of this period also include "the Centurion's servant" (Matthew 8:5–13) and "the calming the storm" (Matthew 8:23–27). When a Roman Centurion shows faith in Jesus by requesting a "healing at a distance", Jesus commends him for his exceptional faith. On the other hand, when his own Apostles show fear of a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus instructs them to have more faith, after which he orders the storm to stop. This period ends with the confession of Peter and Jesus' Transfiguration. The final Galilean ministry begins after the death of John the Baptist as Jesus prepares to go to Jerusalem.

The calling of Matthew takes place in Matthew 9:9. The conflicts and criticism between Jesus and the Pharisees continue; they criticize Jesus for associating with "publicans and

sinner", whereby Jesus responds: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick... For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." In the "mission discourse", Jesus instructs the twelve Apostles who are named in Matthew 10:2-3 to carry no belongings as they travel from city to city and preach. In addition to the twelve Apostles, the opening of the passage of the Sermon on the plain identifies a much larger group of people as disciples (Luke 6:17). In Luke 10:1-16 Jesus sends seventy or seventy-two of these disciples in pairs to prepare towns for his prospective visit. They are instructed to accept hospitality, heal the sick and spread the word that the Kingdom of God is coming. The Gospel of John includes "marriage at Cana" as the first miracle of Jesus taking place in this early period of ministry, with his return to Galilee. The return of Jesus to Galilee follows the arrest of John the Baptist.

In Matthew 11:2-6, two messengers from John the Baptist arrive to ask Jesus if he is the expected Messiah, or "should we expect someone else?" Jesus replies, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor". Following this, Jesus begins to speak to the crowds about the Baptist. The Galilean ministry finishes after the death of John the Baptist and includes the miraculous feeding of the 5000; after hearing of the Baptist's death, Jesus withdraws by boat privately to a solitary place near Bethsaida, where he addresses the crowds who had followed him on foot from the towns - he feeds them all with "five loaves and two fish" supplied by a boy.

The gospels present the walking on water episode in Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:16-21 as an important step in developing the relationship between Jesus and his Apostles at this stage of his ministry. The episode emphasizes the importance of faith by stating that, when he attempted to walk on water, Peter began to sink when he lost faith and became afraid. At the end of the episode, the Apostles increase their faith in Jesus, and, in Matthew 14:33, they say: "Truly you are the Son of God." Major teachings in this period include the "discourse on defilement" in Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7:1-23 where, in response to a complaint from the Pharisees, Jesus states: "What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

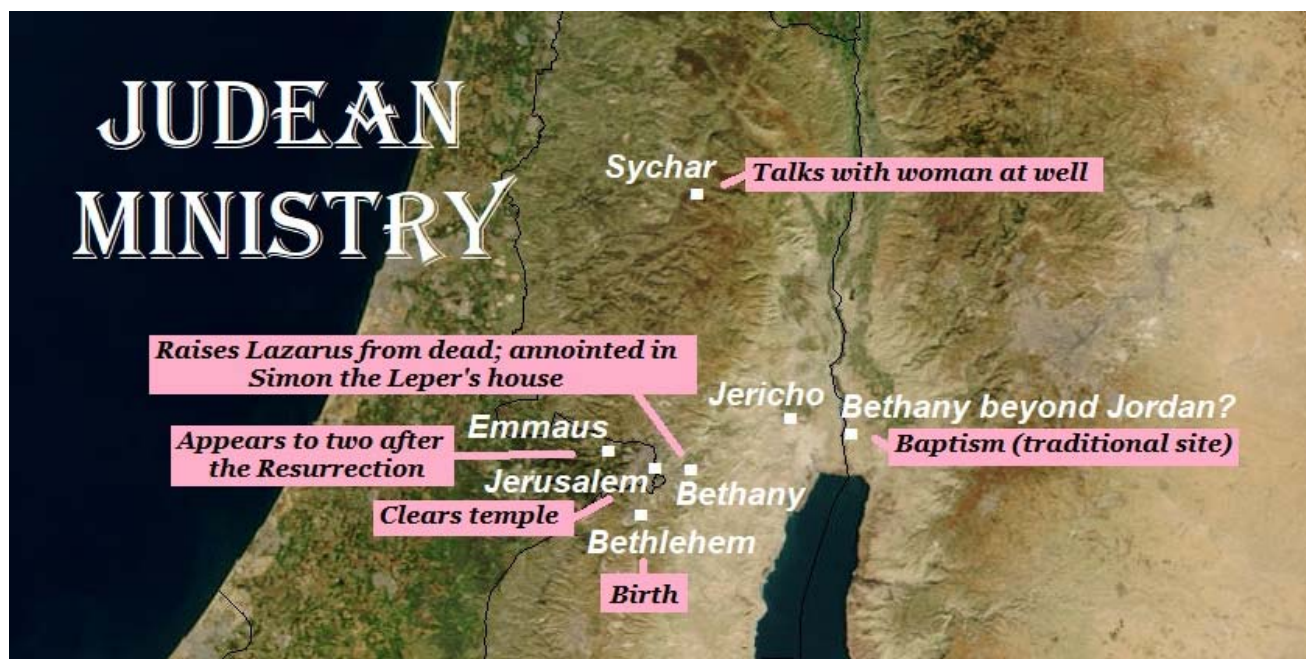
Jesus then withdraws into the "parts of Tyre and Sidon" near the Mediterranean Sea, where the raising from the dead of a Canaanite woman's daughter episode takes place in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. This episode is an example of how Jesus emphasizes the value of faith, telling the woman: "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." The importance of faith is also emphasized in "the cleansing of ten lepers" episode in Luke 17:11-19. In the Gospel of Mark, after passing through Sidon, Jesus enters the region of the Decapolis, a group of ten cities south-east of Galilee, where the healing the deaf-mute miracle is reported in Mark 7:31-37. After the healing, the Apostles say: "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." This episode is the last in a series of narrated miracles which builds up to Peter's eventual proclamation of Jesus as Christ in Mark 8:29.

Later in this period, at about the middle of each of the three Synoptic Gospels, two related episodes mark a turning point in the ministry of Jesus: the Confession of Peter and the

Transfiguration of Jesus. These episodes begin in Caesarea Philippi, just north of the Sea of Galilee, at the beginning of the final journey to Jerusalem which ends in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. These episodes mark the beginnings of the gradual disclosure of the identity of Jesus as the embodiment of the expected Messiah to his disciples; and his prediction of his own suffering and death.

Peter's Confession begins as a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in Matthew 16:13, Mark 8:27 and Luke 9:18. Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answers him: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In Matthew 16:17, Jesus blesses Peter for his answer, and states: "this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven." In blessing Peter, Jesus not only accepts the titles Christ and Son of God, which Peter attributes to him, but declares the proclamation a divine revelation by stating that his Father in Heaven had revealed it to Peter. In this assertion, by endorsing both titles as divine revelation, Jesus unequivocally declares himself to be both Christ and the Son of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, following this episode, Jesus also selects Peter as the leader of the Apostles, and states that "on this rock I will build my church". [Mat.16:18] The word "church" as used here, appears in the Gospels only once more, in Matthew 18:17, and refers to the community of believers at the time

In the following Judean and Perean ministries, Jesus starts his final journey to Jerusalem through Judea. Jesus travels towards Jerusalem about a third of the way down from the Sea of Galilee along the Jordan River (John 10:40–42). The final ministry in Jerusalem is sometimes called the Passion Week and begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. The gospels provide more details about the final ministry than the other periods, devoting about one third of their text to the last week of the life of Jesus in Jerusalem. In the Synoptic Gospels, it is during this week that Jesus drives the money changers from the Second Temple and Judas bargains to betray him. This period culminates in the Last Supper and the "farewell discourse".



In the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the last week in Jerusalem is at the conclusion of the journey through Perea and Judea that Jesus began in Galilee. Jesus starts his final journey to Jerusalem by going around Samaria, through Perea and on through Judea to Jerusalem. Many of the episodes in the later Judean ministry are from the Gospel of Luke but, in general, these sequence of episodes in Luke do not provide enough geographical information to determine Perea, though scholars generally assume that the route Jesus followed from Galilee to Jerusalem passed through Perea. However, the Gospel of John does state that he returned to the area where he was baptized, and John 10:40–42 states that "And in that place many believed in Jesus", saying "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." The area where Jesus was baptized is inferred as the vicinity of the Perea area, given the activities of the Baptist in Bethabara and Enon in John 1:28 and John 3:23.

At the beginning of this period, Jesus predicts his death for the first time, and this prediction then builds up to the other two critical episodes, the final prediction being just before Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time and the week of his crucifixion. In Matthew 16:21–28 and Mark 8:31–33, Jesus teaches his Apostles that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed, and after three days rise again. At the end of this period, the Gospel of John includes the raising of Lazarus episode in John 11:1–46, in which Jesus brings Lazarus of Bethany back to life four days after his burial. In the Gospel of John, the raising of Lazarus is the climax of the "seven signs" which gradually confirm the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the expected Messiah. It is also a pivotal episode which starts the chain of events that leads to the crowds seeking Jesus on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, leading to the decision of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin to plan to kill Jesus.

Even though the testimony of this man raised from the dead did much to consolidate the faith of the mass of believers in the gospel of the kingdom, it had little or no influence on the attitude of the religious leaders and rulers at Jerusalem except to hasten their decision to destroy Jesus and stop his work. The Jewish leaders decreed that Jesus be apprehended and brought to trial on charges of blasphemy and numerous other accusations of flouting the Jewish sacred law; they had declared he should die. Though the Sanhedrin admitted to the resurrection of Lazarus, they attributed this, and all other wonders worked by Jesus, to the power of the prince of devils, with whom Jesus was declared to be in league. It was at this same meeting of the Sanhedrin that Caiaphas, the high priest, first gave expression to that old Jewish adage, which he so many times repeated: "It is better that one man die, than that the community perish."

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."
[John 11:47-50]

Before arriving in Jerusalem, in John 12:9–11, after raising Lazarus from the dead, crowds gather around Jesus and believe in him, and the next day the multitudes that had gathered for the feast in Jerusalem welcome Jesus as he descends from the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem in Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44 and John 12:12–19. In Luke 19:41–44, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he looks at the city and weeps over it, foretelling the suffering that awaits the city.

Jesus rides a young donkey into Jerusalem, reflecting the tale of the Messiah's donkey, an oracle from the Book of Zechariah in which the Jews' humble king enters Jerusalem this way (Zechariah 9:9). People along the way lay cloaks and small branches of trees (known as palm fronds) in front of him and sing part of Psalms 118:25–26. Jesus next expels the money changers from the Second Temple, accusing them of turning it into a den of thieves through their commercial activities. Jesus prophesies about the coming destruction, including false prophets, wars, earthquakes, celestial disorders, persecution of the faithful, the appearance of an "abomination of desolation," and unendurable tribulations (Mark 13:1–23). The mysterious "Son of Man," he says, will dispatch angels to gather the faithful from all parts of the earth (Mark 13:24–27). Jesus warns that these wonders will occur in the lifetimes of the hearers (Mark 13:28–32).

In the three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is followed by the cleansing of the Temple episode, in which Jesus expels the money changers from the Temple, accusing them of turning the Temple to a den of thieves through their commercial activities. This is the only account of Jesus using physical force in any of the Gospels. The synoptics include a number of well-known parables and sermons such as the widow's mite and the Second Coming Prophecy during the week that follows. In that week, the synoptics also narrate conflicts between Jesus and the elders of the Jews, in episodes such as the authority of

Jesus questioned and the woes of the Pharisees, in which Jesus criticizes their hypocrisy. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, approaches the Jewish elders and performs the "bargain of Judas" in which he accepts to betray Jesus and hand him over to the elders. Matthew specifies the price as thirty silver coins.

Jesus comes into conflict with the Jewish elders, such as when they question his authority and when he criticizes them and calls them hypocrites. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve Apostles, secretly strikes a bargain with the Jewish elders, agreeing to betray Jesus to them for 30 silver coins. The Gospel of John recounts of two other feasts in which Jesus taught in Jerusalem before the Passion Week (John 7:1–10:42). In Bethany, a village near Jerusalem, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. This potent sign increases the tension with authorities, who conspire to kill him (John 11). Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet, foreshadowing his entombment. Jesus then makes his Messianic entry into Jerusalem. The cheering crowds greeting Jesus as he enters Jerusalem add to the animosity between him and the establishment. John next recounts Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.

This period of ministry includes the discourse on the Church, in which Jesus anticipates a future community of followers and explains the role of his apostles in leading it. It includes the parables of The Lost Sheep and The Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18, which also refer to the kingdom of Heaven. The general theme of the discourse is the anticipation of a future community of followers, and the role of his apostles in leading it. Addressing his Apostles in Matthew 18:18, Jesus states: "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". The discourse emphasizes the importance of humility and self-sacrifice as the high virtues within the anticipated community. It teaches that in the kingdom of God, it is personal humility that matters, not social prominence and clout.

In Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, Jesus provides a discourse on the End Times, which is also called the Olivet Discourse because it was given on the Mount of Olives. The discourse is mostly about judgment and the expected conduct of the followers of Jesus, and the need for vigilance by the followers in view of the coming judgment. The discourse is generally viewed as referring both to the coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as the End Times and Second Coming of Christ, but the many scholarly opinions about which verses refer to which event remain divided.

A key episode in the final part of the ministry of Jesus is the Last Supper, which includes the institution of the Eucharist. In Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, Luke 22:19–20 during the last supper, Jesus takes bread, breaks it and gives it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is given for you". He also gives them "the cup" to drink, saying this is his blood. While it may have been fermented, none of the biblical accounts refer to it as wine, but rather as "the fruit of the vine" or "the cup". In 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, Paul the Apostle refers to the Last Supper. John 14–17 concludes the Last Supper with a long, three-chapter sermon known as the farewell discourse which prepares the disciples for the final departure of Jesus.

PARABLES:



Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell.
[Ps. 78:2]

I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them.
[Hosea 12:10]

The parables of Jesus can be found in the synoptic gospels, and in some of the non-canonical writings, but not in the Gospel of John. They are located mainly within the three Synoptic Gospels. They represent a main part of the teachings of Jesus, forming approximately one third of his recorded teachings. Christians place high emphasis on these parables; since they are the purported words of Jesus, they are believed to be what the Father has taught, indicated by John 8:28 and 14:10. Jesus's parables are seemingly simple and memorable stories, often with imagery, and all convey messages. Scholars have commented that although these parables seem simple, the messages they convey are deep, and central to the teachings of Jesus. Christian authors view them not as mere similitudes which serve the purpose of illustration, but as internal analogies in which nature becomes a witness for the spiritual world.

Many of Jesus's parables refer to simple everyday things, such as a woman baking bread (parable of the Leaven), a man knocking on his neighbor's door at night (parable of the Friend at Night), or the aftermath of a roadside mugging (parable of the Good Samaritan); yet they deal with major religious themes, such as the growth of the kingdom of God, the importance of prayer, and the meaning of love. In Western civilization, these parables formed the prototype for the term parable and in the modern age, even among those who know little of the Bible, the parables of Jesus remain some of the best-known stories in the world.

When asked by his disciples about why he speaks in parables to the people, Jesus replies that the chosen disciples have been given to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven", unlike the rest of their people, "For the one who has will be given more and he will have in abundance. But the one who does not have will be deprived even more.", going on to say that the majority of their generation have grown "dull hearts" and thus are unable to understand.



The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'"
[Mat. 13:10-13]

Jesus was a teacher who taught as the occasion served; he was not a systematic teacher. Jesus taught not so much from the law as from life, by parables. And when he employed a parable for illustrating his message, he designed to utilize just one feature of the story for that purpose. Though Jesus' public teaching mainly consisted in parables and short discourses, when he failed to reach the minds of his listeners by means of one illustration, he would restate his message and employ another type of parable for purposes of illumination. Jesus always tried to make a difference in his teaching so as to suit his presentation of truth to the minds and hearts before him. When he stood before a multitude of varying intellects and temperaments, he could not speak different words for each class of

hearers, but he did tell a story to convey his teaching; and each group, even each individual, was able to make his own interpretation of Jesus' parable in accordance with his own intellectual and spiritual endowments.

Jesus advised against the use of either fables or allegories in teaching the truths of the gospel. He did recommend the free use of parables, especially nature parables. He emphasized the value of utilizing the analogy existing between the natural and the spiritual worlds as a means of teaching truth. He frequently alluded to the natural as the unreal and fleeting shadow of spirit realities. Jesus narrated three or four parables from the Hebrew scriptures, calling attention to the fact that this method of teaching was not wholly new. However, it became almost a new method of teaching as he employed it from this time onward.

In teaching the apostles the value of parables, Jesus called attention to the point that the parable provides for a simultaneous appeal to vastly different levels of mind and spirit. The parable stimulates the imagination, challenges the discrimination, and provokes critical thinking; it promotes sympathy without arousing antagonism. The parable proceeds from the things which are known to the discernment of the unknown. The parable utilizes the material and natural as a means of introducing the spiritual. Parables favor the making of impartial moral decisions. The parable evades much prejudice and puts new truth gracefully into the mind and does all this with the arousal of a minimum of the self-defense of personal resentment.

To reject the truth contained in parabolical analogy requires conscious intellectual action which is directly in contempt of one's honest judgment and fair decision. The parable conduces to the forcing of thought through the sense of hearing. The use of the parable form of teaching enables the teacher to present new and even startling truths while at the same time he largely avoids all controversy and outward clashing with tradition and established authority. The parable also possesses the advantage of stimulating the memory of the truth taught when the same familiar scenes are subsequently encountered.

Many wrong ideas concerning the teachings of Jesus may be secured by attempting to make allegories out of his parables; all such attempts to make a natural parable yield spiritual analogies in all its features can only result in confusion and serious misconception of the true purpose of such a parable. To those who would hear, it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the undiscerning multitudes and to those who sought Jesus' destruction, the mysteries of the kingdom were presented in parables. Jesus conveyed his message this way so that those who really desire to enter the kingdom may discern the meaning of the teaching and thus find salvation, while those who listen only to ensnare Jesus and his Apostles may be the more confounded in that they will see without seeing and will hear without hearing.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD:



I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

[John 10:11,14-16]

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.
[Ps. 95:6,7]

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

[Ps. 110:3]

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

[Is. 40:11]

For out of you [Bethlehem] will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

[Mat. 2:6]

Jesus the good shepherd is referenced in the book of John, chapter 10. In his own words, Jesus tells us in John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:14-15: "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me just as my Father knows me and I know my Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep." Jesus is the good shepherd to his believers just as the shepherds were of their livestock. A shepherd tends his flock day and night; he would gather the sheep into a sheepfold at night for their protection. The sheepfold was a pen, a cave, or an area backed by stone walls. Since there were no doors, the shepherd would often sleep or sit in the opening, ready to guard his sheep from harm.

The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.

[John 10:2-5]

Being different than a hired keeper who might run away in the face of danger, the flock belongs to the shepherd who would stay and defend them. He had a genuine loving concern for what belonged to him. In chapter 10, Jesus illustrates how the shepherd cares for his flock, protecting them from weather, thieves, and predatory animals. He loves and shields them and, if necessary, he would lay down his life for them. Jesus is that loving protector and caretaker for his flock. Ezekiel 34 foretold of the Messiah who would, like a true shepherd, come to caringly keep God's people. It was a loving message of the coming Christ, the good shepherd.

I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness... You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the sovereign Lord.

[Ez. 34:11,12,31]

John 10 tells us how thieves and wolves come to destroy the sheep. But the good shepherd is there to save them. These verses tell us that though Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy God's people (John 10:10). Jesus is there to protect, love, and save us from

destruction giving us eternal life. Jesus came not to merely be the hired keeper but came as the one (the only one), who was and is, completely committed to us - even to his own death and resurrection. Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his physical life for you and me. Jesus not only asserts his own authority as "the good shepherd," but he also rebukes the false religious leaders. He refers to them as false shepherds who are actually thieves and robbers (10:1,8) who come to the flock to "steal, kill, and destroy," (10:10). He also calls them hired hands who are acting only in their own interest and not for the benefit of the sheep (10:12-13). By contrast, Jesus is the good shepherd who owns the flock and lays down his life for the sheep (10:11,14-17). Thus, this passage is a running analogy in which the people are the sheep, Jesus is their true shepherd, and the rival religious leaders are rebuked and denounced as false shepherds who prey on the flock.

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[John 10:27,28]

During Jesus post-resurrection appearance to Peter, he asks him to take good care of his sheep, to be a good and a true shepherd to the flock. He warns Peter to not betray their confidence in him and to not be taken by surprise at the enemy's hand. Peter is to be on guard at all times and to feed his sheep not to forsake the flock. Peter is to be an example and an inspiration to all his fellow shepherds, the remaining Apostles. Peter is to love the flock as Jesus has loved him; he is to devote himself to their welfare even as Jesus had devoted his life to Peter's welfare.

"Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

[John 21:16]

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

[1Pet. 2:24,25]

HEALING, MIRACLES, AND FAITH:

In the gospel accounts, Jesus devotes a large portion of his ministry performing miracles, especially healings. The miracles can be classified into two main categories: healing miracles and nature miracles. The healing miracles include cures for physical ailments, exorcisms, and resurrections of the dead. The nature miracles show Jesus' power over nature, and include turning water into wine, walking on water, and calming a storm, among others. Jesus states that his miracles are from a divine source. When Jesus' opponents accuse him of performing exorcisms by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, Jesus counters that he performs them by the "Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28) or "finger of

God", arguing that all logic suggests that Satan would not let his demons assist the children of God because it would divide Satan's house and bring his kingdom to desolation; furthermore, he asks his opponents that if he exorcises by Beelzebul, "by whom do your followers drive them out?" (Luke 11:20). In Matthew 12:31–32, he goes on to say that "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven", but whoever insults the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he or she carries the guilt of his or her sin forever.

In John, Jesus' miracles are described as "signs", performed to prove his mission and divinity. However, in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, when asked by some teachers of the Law and some Pharisees to give miraculous signs to prove his authority, Jesus refuses, saying that no sign shall come to a corrupt and evil people. Also, in the synoptic gospels, the crowds regularly respond to Jesus' miracles with awe and press on him to heal their sick. In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as unpressured by the crowds, who often respond to his miracles with trust and faith. One characteristic shared among all miracles of Jesus in these gospel accounts is that he performed them freely and never requested or accepted any form of payment. The gospel episodes include descriptions of the miracles of Jesus also often including supplemental teachings; the miracles themselves involve an element of teaching. Many of the miracles teach the importance of faith. In the cleansing of ten lepers and the raising of Jairus' daughter, for instance, the beneficiaries are told that their healing was due to their faith.

Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

[Mat. 9:2-6]

And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

[Mat. 13:58]

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift from God – not by works.

[Eph. 2:8,9]

The healing wonders which every now and then attended Jesus' mission on earth were not a part of his plan of proclaiming the kingdom. They were incidentally inherent in having on earth a divine being of well-nigh unlimited divine prerogatives in association with an unprecedented combination of divine mercy and human sympathy. But such so called miracles gave Jesus much trouble in that they provided prejudice-raising publicity and afforded much unsought notoriety. Ordinarily, Jesus did not deliberately perform any so-called miracles of healing. Nevertheless, scores of afflicted found restoration of health and happiness as a result of the reconstructive power of the intense faith which impelled them to

seek for healing. In the absence of direct word from the Master regarding the nature of these cases of spontaneous healing, it would be presumptuous to explain how they were accomplished, but it would be reasonable to believe that many of these apparent miracles of healing, as they occurred in the course of Jesus' ministry, were the result of the following three powerful, potent, and associated influences:

1. The presence of strong, dominant, and living faith in the heart of the human being who persistently sought healing, together with the fact that such healing was desired for its spiritual benefits rather than for purely physical restoration.
2. The existence, concomitant with such human faith, of the great sympathy and compassion of the incarnated and mercy-dominated Son of God, who actually possessed in his person almost unlimited and timeless creative healing powers and prerogatives.
3. Along with the faith of the creature and the life of the Son it should also be considered that this God-man was the personified expression of the Father's will. If, in the contact of the human need and the divine power to meet it, the Father did not will otherwise, the two became one, and the healing occurred unconsciously in the human spirit of Jesus but was immediately recognized by his divine nature.

Many of the cures effected by Jesus in connection with his ministry appear to resemble the working of miracles, but it should be considered that many of them might have been fortuitous transformations of mind and spirit as may occur in the experience of expectant and faith-dominated persons who are under the immediate and inspirational influence of a strong, positive, and beneficent personality whose ministry banishes fear and destroys anxiety.

The Hebrews had long been nurtured on traditions of miracles and legends of wonders. The Jews envisaged a deliverer who would come in miraculous power to cast down Israel's enemies and establish the Jews as world rulers, free from want and oppression. Jesus knew that this hope would never be realized. He knew that the kingdom of heaven had to do with the overthrow of evil in the hearts of men, and that it was purely a matter of spiritual concern. Even Jesus' Apostles confidently expected that Jesus would inaugurate his assumption of Messianic authority with the event of his turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana, and that he would do so with great power and sublime grandeur. They remembered the extraordinary phenomena attendant upon his baptism, and they believed that his future course on earth would be marked by increasing manifestations of supernatural wonders and miraculous demonstrations.

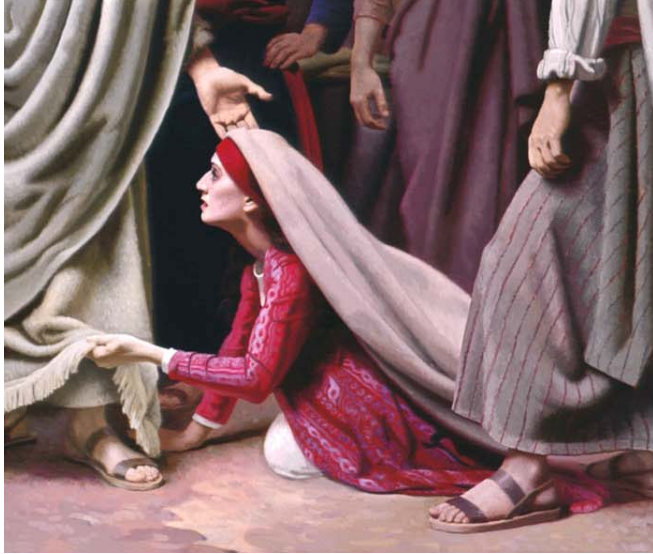
Jesus pondered whether he should in any manner lend his universe powers to the gratification of the Jewish hankering for the spectacular and the marvelous? He decided that he should not. He settled upon a policy of procedure which eliminated all such practices as the method of bringing his mission to the notice of men. And he consistently lived up to this great decision. Even when he permitted the manifestation of numerous miraculous ministrations of mercy, he almost invariably admonished the recipients of his healing

ministry to tell no man about the benefits they had received. And always did he refuse the taunting challenge of his enemies to “show us a sign” in proof and demonstration of his divinity. Jesus very wisely foresaw that the working of miracles and the execution of wonders would call forth only shallow allegiance by overawing the human mind; such performances would not reveal God nor save men. He refused to become a mere wonder-worker. He resolved to become occupied with but a single task - the establishment of his Father’s kingdom of heaven.

MIRACLES OF JESUS				
Permanent Disabilities Healed	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus Heals a Mute Man	9:32-34			
Jesus Heals a Deaf and Dumb Man		7:31-37		
Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman’s Spine			13:10-17	
Jesus Heals a Lame Man at Bethesda pool				5:1-15
Jesus Heals a Paralytic Man	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
Jesus Heals a Man’s Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus Heals a Blind, Mute Demoniac	12:22-23		11:14-23	
Jesus Casts Out Demons and Heals Many Sick at Evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41	
Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind				9:1-41
Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Jesus Heals Two Blind Men	9:27-31			
Jesus Heals Two More Blind Men	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Jesus Heals Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-14	
Jesus Heals a Man With Dropsy on the Sabbath			14:1-6	
Illnesses / Injuries Healed	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus Heals a Woman with Issue of Blood	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	
Jesus Heals a Servant’s Severed Ear			22:50-51	
Jesus Heals Peter’s Mother-in-Law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Jesus Heals an Official’s Son Remotely				4:46-54
Jesus Heals Many Sick in Gennesaret	14:34-36	6:53-56		

MIRACLES OF JESUS				
Evil Spirits Removed	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus Delivers a Gentile Woman's Demon-Possessed Daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Jesus Delivers a Demon-Possessed Man		1:21-28	4:31-37	
Jesus Delivers a Demon-Possessed Man and Casts Demons into a Herd of Pigs	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
The Dead Raised to Life	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus Raises a Widow's Son in Nain			7:11-17	
Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead				11:1-45
Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter to Life	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
Other Miracles	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Temple Tax Placed in a Fish's Mouth	17:24-27			
Jesus Walks on Water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
Jesus Turns Water into Wine				2:1-11
First Miraculous Catch of Fish			5:1-11	
Second Miraculous Catch of Fish				21:1-14
Jesus Feeds 5000 with 5 Loaves & 2 Fish	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
Jesus Feeds 4000 with 7 Loaves & few Fish	15:32-39	8:1-13		
Jesus Causes a Fig Tree to Wither	21:18-22	11:12-14		
Jesus Calms a Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	

Jesus healing the bleeding woman (or "woman with an issue of blood" and other variants) is one of the most intriguing miracles of Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew 9:20–22, Mark 5:25–34, Luke 8:43–48). In these Gospel accounts, this miracle immediately follows an exorcism at Gerasa and precedes the miracle of the raising of the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue leader, from the dead. The incident occurred while Jesus was traveling to Jairus' house, amid a large crowd. An overwhelming number of people were in the crowd that day. Luke 8:42 says in his report that, "As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him." But the woman was determined to reach Jesus however she could. By this time, Jesus had developed a widespread reputation as a remarkable teacher and healer. Though the woman had sought help from many doctors (and spent all her money in the process) to no avail, she still had faith that she could finally find healing if only she reached out for Jesus.



And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years... When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"... Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

[Mark 5:25, 27-30, 33, 34]

Not only did the woman have to overcome discouragement in order to reach out; she also had to overcome shame. The woman's condition, which is not clear in terms of a modern medical diagnosis, is translated as an "issue of blood" in the King James Version and a "flux of blood" in the Wycliffe Bible and some other versions. Because of the continual bleeding, the woman would have been continually regarded in Jewish law as a "niddah" or menstruating woman, and so ceremonially unclean. In order to be regarded as clean, the flow of blood would need to stop for at least 7 days. Because of the constant bleeding, this woman lived in a continual state of uncleanness which would have brought upon her social and religious isolation. As someone who was considered to be unclean, the woman couldn't worship in the synagogue or enjoy normal social relationships (anyone who touched her while she was bleeding was also considered unclean). Due to this deep sense of shame, the woman would likely have been afraid to touch Jesus within his sight, so she decided to approach him as unobtrusively as possible.

Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

[Luke 6:18,19]

In the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus is said to have raised several persons from death, but none of these became immortal in the process like Jesus himself and what has since been promised everybody at the end of times. These resurrections included the daughter of Jairus shortly after death, a young man in the midst of his own funeral procession, and his close friend Lazarus, who had been buried for four days. According to the Gospel of Matthew, after Jesus's resurrection, many of the dead saints came out of their tombs and entered Jerusalem, where they appeared to many. The resurrected Jesus Christ commissioned his followers to, among other things, raise the dead. Similar resurrections are credited to Christian apostles and saints. Peter allegedly raised a woman named Dorcas (called Tabitha), and Paul restored a man named Eutychus who had fallen asleep and fell from a window to his death, according to the book of Acts. Proceeding the apostolic era,

many saints were said to resurrect the dead, as recorded in Orthodox Christian hagiographies (writings on the lives of the saints).

The second Sabbath before the departure of the apostles and the new corps of evangelists on the second preaching tour of Galilee, Jesus spoke in the Capernaum synagogue on the “Joys of Righteous Living.” When Jesus had finished speaking, a large group of those who were maimed, halt, sick, and afflicted crowded up around him, seeking healing. Also in this group were the apostles, many of the new evangelists, and Pharisaic spies from Jerusalem. Everywhere that Jesus went (except when in the hills going about the Father’s business) the Jerusalem spies were sure to follow. As Jesus stood talking to the people, the leader of the spying Pharisees induced a man with a withered hand to approach him and ask if it would be lawful to be healed on the Sabbath day or should he seek help on another day.

When Jesus saw the man, heard his words, and perceived that he had been sent by the Pharisees, he asked: “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” [Mat. 12:11,12] Jesus knew why they had sent this man into his presence. They were seeking cause for offense in him, tempting him to show mercy on the Sabbath day. He called them to witness that it is lawful to exhibit loving-kindness on the Sabbath day not only to animals but also to men. And as they all stood before him in silence, Jesus, addressing the man with the withered hand, said: “‘Stretch out your hand.’ So, he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.” [Mat. 12:13,14] This is the first case of a miracle to be wrought by Jesus in response to the challenge of his enemies. And the Master performed this miracle, not just as a demonstration of his healing power, but as an effective protest against making the Sabbath rest of religion a veritable bondage of meaningless restrictions upon all mankind.

The ninth chapter of the Gospel of John in the New Testament of the Christian Bible records the healing of a man who had been blind from birth, a miracle performed by Jesus, and their subsequent dealings with the Pharisees. According to the John, it was at the Siloam Pool where Jesus healed the blind man (John 9:1–11). The Siloam Pool has long since been considered a sacred Christian site, even if the correct identification of the site itself was uncertain. This miraculous healing is one of the most unusual of all the Master’s miracles. This man did not ask for healing. He did not know that the Jesus who had directed him to wash at Siloam, and who had promised him vision, was the prophet of Galilee who had preached in Jerusalem during the feast of tabernacles. This man had little faith that he would receive his sight, but the people of that day had great faith in the efficacy of the spittle of any great or holy man.

Jesus, taking the initiative, notices a man blind from birth. The Apostles treat the man’s condition as a theological problem. People commonly assumed that disease and disorders on both the personal and national level were due to sin, But the case of a person born blind raises the question of whose sin caused this condition, that of his parents or of the person himself while in the womb. His disciples asked him who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answers “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this

happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:3-5). The disciples will soon see in the history of this man the meaning of this man's lifelong blindness. In the man himself, the grace of God will work mightily as both a bodily and spiritual illumination. Here is a man in whom Jesus can manifest God's works and thus reveal something of God himself and his purposes on earth. Jesus is being led by his Father to provide a sign that he is indeed the "light of the world".

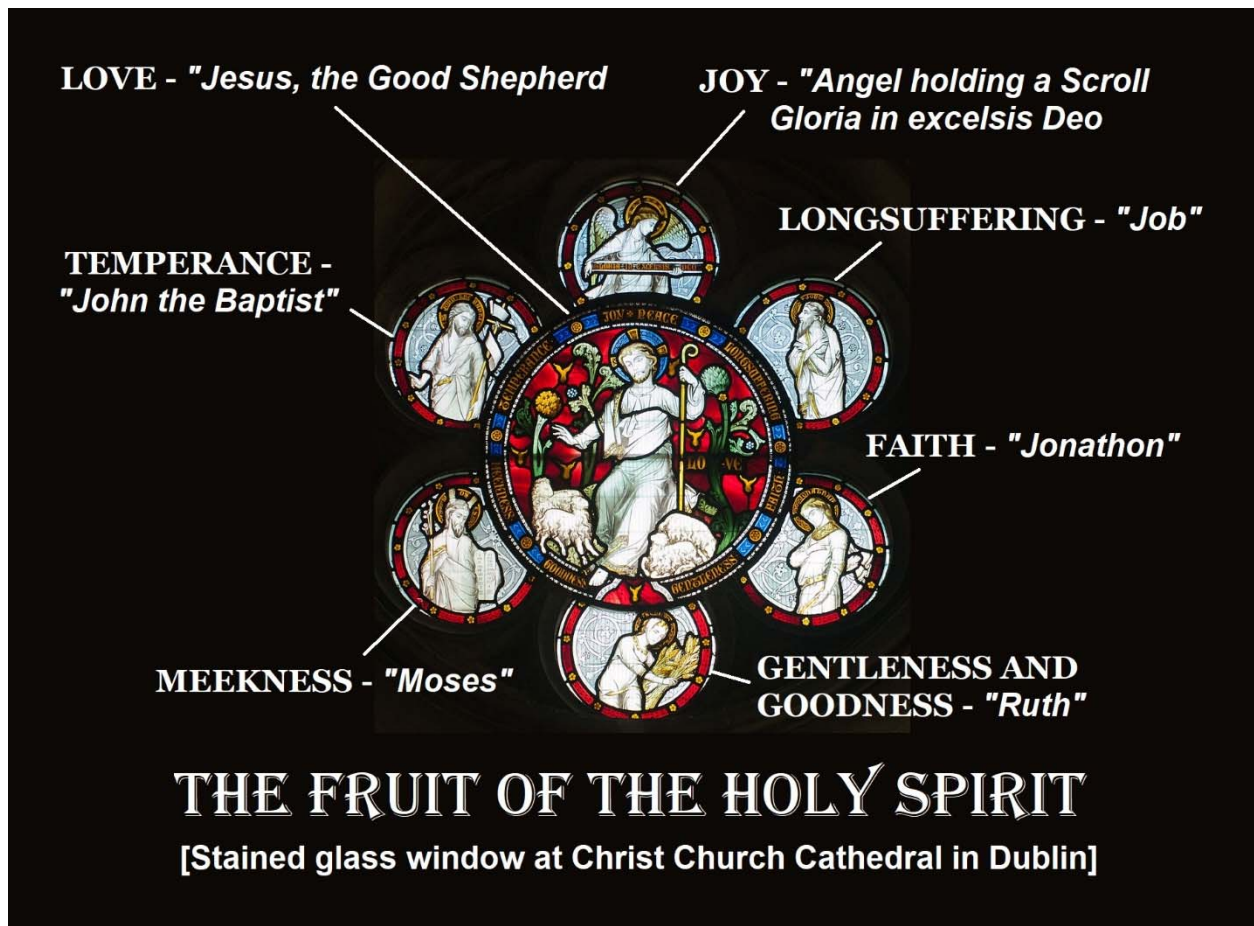
Jesus then spits on the ground, makes some remedial mud with the saliva, and applies it on the man's eyes. Notice the importance that this ritual of Jesus was ceremonially performed on a Sabbath, a day wherein all such acts of work are restricted. He proceeds in this ritual by telling the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man does as commanded and proceeds home "seeing". His neighbors are amazed that this onetime blind beggar's eyes were now "opened". They bring to the Pharisees the man who had been blind, and the Pharisees ask him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replies, "and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees accuse Jesus as not coming from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others ask, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So, they were divided. They turn once again to the blind man and ask him what he thinks of his healer and the man replies, "He is a prophet." Prophets, as divinely sent men, are even more authoritative than learned rabbis. If Jesus has broken through some of these restrictions by which they have "placed a hedge about the Law," he needed a prophetic right to do it. They summoned the man who had been blind a second time and pronounce that they know that Jesus a sinner," wherein the man replies, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"



A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" [John 9:24,25]

Jesus had heard that the Pharisees had thrown the man out, and when Jesus found him, he asks, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man replies, "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus answers, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man says, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus finishes with, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM:



The fruit of the Holy Spirit is a biblical term that sums up nine attributes of a person or community living in accord with the Holy Spirit, according to chapter 5 of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The fruit is contrasted with the works of the flesh which immediately precede it in this chapter: "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." [Gal. 5:19-21]



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

[Gal. 5:22,23]

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)
[Eph. 5:8,9]

Catholic tradition follows the Vulgate version of Galatians in listing 12 fruits: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity (kindness), goodness, longanimity (generosity), mildness (gentleness), faith, modesty, continency (self-control), and chastity. This tradition was defended by Thomas Aquinas in his work *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas pointed that numbered among the fruit of the Holy Spirit are certain virtues, such as charity, meekness, faith, and chastity. Augustine defined virtue as "a good habit consonant with our nature." Though traditionally discussed as nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit, the original Greek term translated as "fruit" is singular. Aquinas explained, "Consequently fruit is mentioned there in the singular, on account of its being generically one, though divided into many species which are spoken of as so many fruits." Augustine's commentary on Galatians 5:25-26, says, "the Apostle had no intention of teaching us how many (either works of the flesh, or fruits of the Spirit) there are; but to show how the former should be avoided, and the latter sought after."

An analysis of the fruit of the kingdom seems to recognize spiritual "fruit" on three categorical levels of manifestation. The first appearance of the fruit of the Holy Spirit describes the most basic recognizable characteristics of a newly born citizen of the kingdom of heaven. These personality traits comprise the spiritual foundation that distinguishes a newfound son or daughter of the kingdom, and it is on this foundation that this child of faith embarks on his mission to seek and do the Father's will and consequently change the supreme nature of the world. From this spiritual foundation, there arise on the personal repercussions in character development that result from a faith-child's efforts in doing the Father's will in loving ministry to his fellow brothers and sisters. These are the spiritual transformations enacted on a dedicated child of the kingdom of God.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.
[James 3:17,18]



By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

[Mat. 7:16-20]

As we apply our "fruit of the spirit" to good use in carrying out the loving will of our Father, as we lovingly minister to our brothers and sisters, these fruits attain the shine of divinity within our souls. This is the personally enjoyed fruit of the spirit in practical application, and it signifies the harmonious functioning of a faith-child in the attainment of elevated mind, in the growth of the soul, and in the attunement with the heavenly Father. Finally, from the supreme impact of the socially applied "fruit of the spirit" on the collective meanings and values of spiritual ministry, there is manifested by evolving faith-pilgrims a divine unity in faith and reason, and this individualized quality of spiritual unity is impressed upon the world at large. There results a coordinated enhancement of the innate recognition for spiritual

meanings and values, and this enhanced comprehension benefits both the individual child of faith and the social welfare of the world at large.

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance... The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

[Mat. 3:8,10]

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

[Mat. 12:33]

Survival faith is living faith. The willingness to be freely guided by the spiritual shining of the Father's inner loving light brings about an inevitable transformation of personal soul-identity, and this change in self-identity brings about an outwardly visible renewal of personal expression and action. The Father inspires such a living faith that increasingly manifests the fruit of that divine spirit which first inspired it in the human heart. We are compelled to imitate the loving perfection of the Father. The loving spirit of the Father becomes dominant in the day-to-day life of such a spirit-led believer, and this influence is expressed by a noticeable increase in the recognizable fruit of the spirit. This faith lovingly leads the way towards the fruitful carrying out of the Father's will in service for mankind. The kingdom believer dedicates his life to the noble cause of leading mankind to search for the eternal realities of God. Such a faith shall see that which eye has not seen, ear heard, nor the human mind conceived.

Entrance through the portals of the kingdom of heaven is enabled by faith and living within the kingdom is guided by the golden rule of love. Being guided by the Father's will in the yielding of the fruit of the spirit is the law of the kingdom. A true believer is justified by faith, fellowshiped by grace, and sanctified to the eternal service of the children of the heavenly Father. By faith you are saved, and this regenerating salvation will lead you into real peace with God. The spirit of the Father indwells you and leads you to salvation. If you wholeheartedly follow his spirit guidance, you will begin to see with the eyes of the spirit - you will be re-born in the spirit, and so finding yourself born of the spirit and happily in the kingdom of God, you will begin to bear in your daily life the abundant fruit of the spirit.

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

[Mat. 13:23]

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

[Mat. 21:43]

It is through the ministry of selfless service as inspired by our true and all-consuming faith that we are delivered from the darkness of doubt by the birth of the spirit into the light of faith - the kingdom of heaven. As mortal lives become dominated by spiritual leading, they

experience genuine joy in life and their days become filled with sublime peace and confident righteousness. These spirit-guided lives are progressively building upon a living and positive foundation of faith that provides a very real sense of spiritual certainty and empowerment. Such personal soul-experience of this fruit-bearing faith provides a sense of religious security that overcomes doubts, eliminates fears, and erases uncertainties.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
[Col. 3:12]



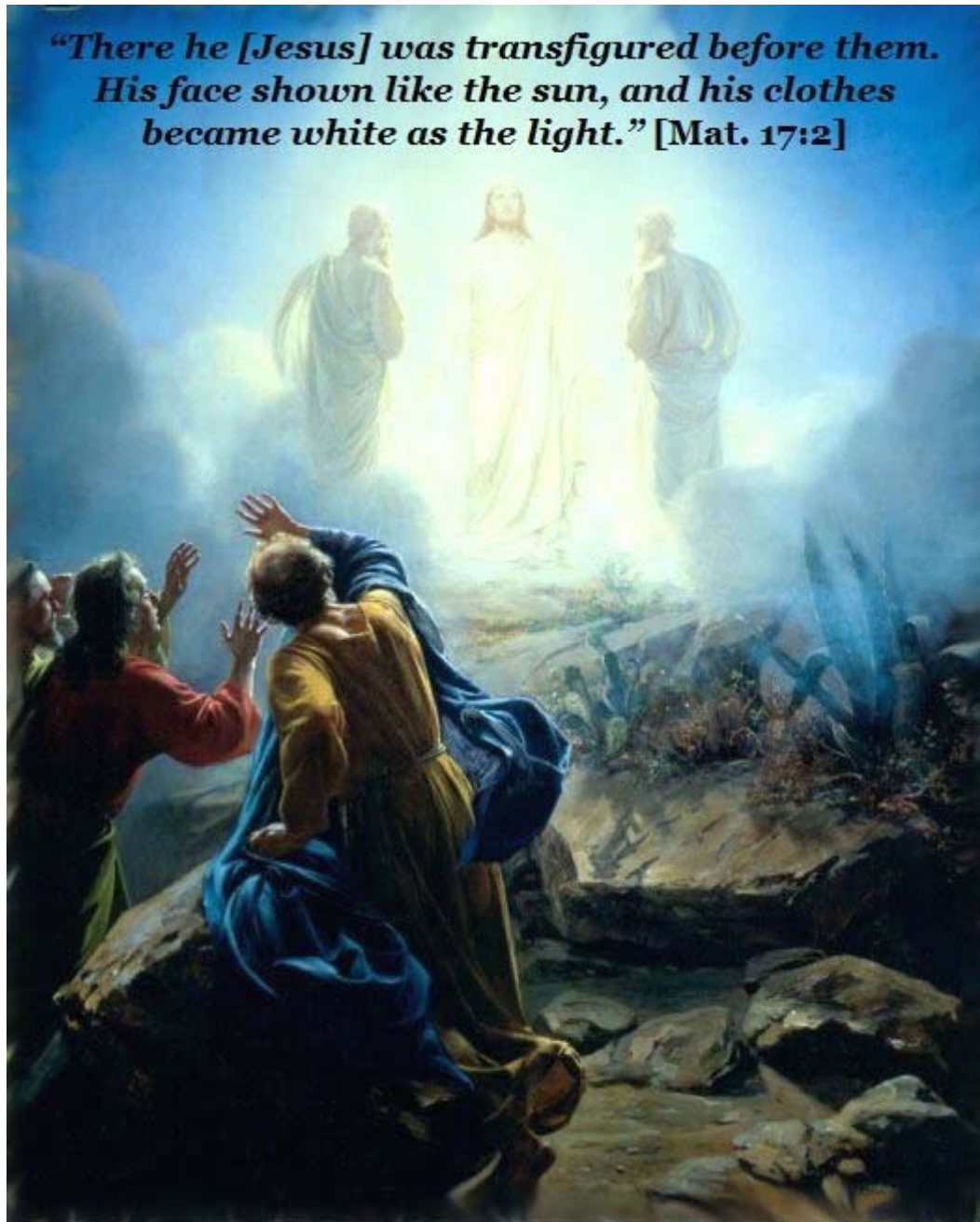
PARABLE OF THE VINE

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."
[John 15:1,2,4,5,7]

TRANSFIGURATION:

The Transfiguration is one of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. This miracle is unique among others that appear in the canonical gospels, in that the miracle happens to Jesus himself. Thomas Aquinas considered the Transfiguration "the greatest miracle" in that it complemented Jesus' baptism and showed the perfection of life in heaven. The Transfiguration is one of the five major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of Jesus, the others being Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension. In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is a pivotal moment, and the setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place of the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth. Moreover, Christians consider the Transfiguration to fulfill an Old Testament messianic

prophecy that Elijah would return again after his ascension (Malachi 4:5–6). The very last of the writing prophets, Malachi, promised a return of Elijah to hold out hope for repentance before judgment (Mal. 4:5–6). Elijah himself would reappear in the Transfiguration. There he would appear alongside Moses as a representative of all the prophets who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Matt. 17:2–9; Mark 9:2–10; Luke 9:28–36).



After Jesus had done many miracles in the Galilee region he went into the surrounding territories and over to the cities of Tyre and Sidon along the coast. He also journeyed over

to the cities of the Decapolis and finally up to Caesarea Philippi in the far north near Mount Hermon. He then asked his disciples who they thought he was and as they were guessing Peter confessed, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Mat. 16:16) Around six days after Jesus revealed to his disciples that he was the Christ, the son of the living God, the account of the "transfiguration of Jesus" is the next major event and appears in Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–8 and Luke 9:28–36. Jesus takes Peter and two other apostles with him and goes up to a mountain, which is not named, to pray, and he is "transfigured" before them. They were heavy with sleep but when they wake up, they see his face shining like the sun, and his garments white as snow. They also see Moses and Elijah talking with him and they become filled with fear.

As the two men are parting from them, Peter speaks, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (Mat. 17:4) As he is speaking, a bright cloud overshadows them, and a voice speaks out of the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Mat. 17:5) The voice of God attesting to the truth of Jesus' Sonship was the second time God's voice was heard. The first time was at Jesus' baptism prior to his public ministry by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). When the disciples hear this, they are terrified and fall on their faces. Jesus comes and touches them, and the vision goes away; they see only Jesus. As they are coming down from the mountain, Jesus says to them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." (Mat. 17:9)

Therefore, the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ was a unique display of his divine character and a glimpse of the glory, which Jesus had before he came to earth in human form. Jesus, whose glory was veiled in flesh, became unveiled to these three disciples and they behold his glory, the same glory that will be seen when he returns to set up his kingdom which will never pass away. The Transfiguration not only supports the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, (as in his Baptism), but the statement "listen to him" identifies him as the messenger and mouth-piece of God. This significance is enhanced by the presence of Elijah and Moses, for it indicates to the apostles that Jesus is the voice of God, and, instead of Elijah or Moses, he should be listened to, by virtue of his filial relationship with God. 2 Peter 1:16–18 echoes the same message: at the Transfiguration, God assigns to Jesus a special "honor and glory" and it is the turning point at which God exalts Jesus above all other powers in creation.

Symbolically, the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets. But God's voice from heaven – "Listen to Him!" - clearly shows that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. The One who is the new and living way is replacing the old – he is the fulfillment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, in his glorified form they see a preview of his coming glorification and enthronement as King of kings and Lord of lords. The disciples never forgot what happened that day on the mountain and no doubt this was intended. John wrote in his gospel, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Peter also wrote of

it, Those who witnessed the transfiguration bore witness to it to the other disciples and to countless millions down through the centuries.

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

[2Pet. 1:16-18]

CRUCIFIXION:

The Last Supper is the final meal that Jesus shares with his twelve apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion. The Last Supper is mentioned in all four canonical gospels; Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (11:23–26) also refers to it. During the meal, Jesus predicts that one of his apostles will betray him. Despite each Apostle's assertion that he would not betray him, Jesus reiterates that the betrayer would be one of those present. Matthew 26:23–25 and John 13:26–27 specifically identify Judas as the traitor.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus takes bread, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body given for you". He then has them all drink from a cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:19–20). The Christian sacrament or ordinance of the Eucharist is based on these events. Although the Gospel of John does not include a description of the bread-and-wine ritual during the Last Supper, most scholars agree that John 6:22–59 (the Bread of Life Discourse) has a eucharistic character and resonates with the institution narratives in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Pauline writings on the Last Supper.



And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.
[Luke 22:19,20]

In all four gospels, Jesus predicts that Peter will deny knowledge of him three times before the rooster crows the next morning. In Luke and John, the prediction is made during the Supper (Luke 22:34, John 22:34). In Matthew and Mark, the prediction is made after the Supper; Jesus also predicts that all his Apostles will desert him (Matthew 26:31–34, Mark 14:27–30). The Gospel of John provides the only account of Jesus washing his Apostles' feet after the meal. John also includes a long sermon by Jesus, preparing his Apostles (now without Judas) for his departure. Chapters 14–17 of the Gospel of John are known as the Farewell Discourse and are a significant source of Christological content.

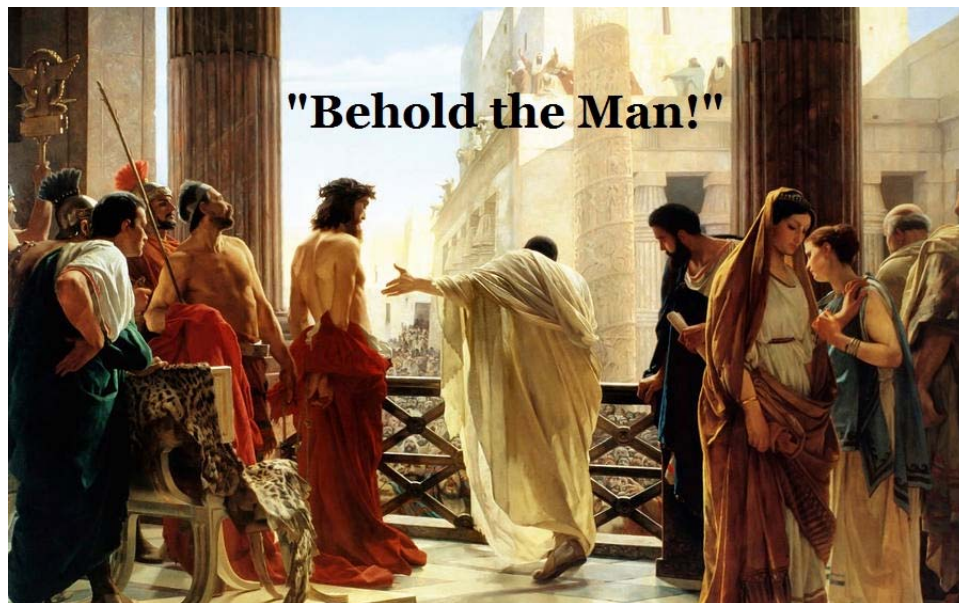
In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus and his disciples go to the garden Gethsemane, where Jesus prays to be spared his coming ordeal. Then Judas comes with an armed mob, sent by the chief priests, scribes and elders. He kisses Jesus to identify him to the crowd, which then arrests Jesus. In an attempt to stop them, an unnamed Apostle of Jesus uses a sword to cut off the ear of a man in the crowd. After Jesus' arrest, his disciples go into hiding, and Peter, when questioned, thrice denies knowing Jesus. After the third denial, Peter hears the rooster crow and recalls Jesus' prediction about his denial. Peter then weeps bitterly. In John (18:1–11), Jesus does not pray to be spared his crucifixion, as the gospel portrays him as scarcely touched by such human weakness. The people who arrest him are Roman soldiers and Temple guards. Instead of being betrayed by a kiss, Jesus proclaims his identity, and when he does, the soldiers and officers fall to the ground. The gospel identifies Peter as the disciple who used the sword, and Jesus rebukes him for it.

After his arrest, Jesus is taken to the Sanhedrin, the authoritative Jewish judicial body. The gospel accounts differ on the details of the trials. In Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53 and Luke 22:54, Jesus is taken to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, where he is mocked and beaten that night. Early the next morning, the chief priests and scribes lead Jesus away into their council. John 18:12–14 states that Jesus is first taken to Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law, and then to the high priest. During the trials Jesus speaks very little, mounts no defense, and gives very infrequent and indirect answers to the priests' questions, prompting an officer to slap him. In Matthew 26:62 Jesus' unresponsiveness leads Caiaphas to ask him, "Are you not going to answer?" In Mark 14:61 the high priest then asks Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus replies, "I am", and then predicts the coming of the Son of Man. This provokes Caiaphas to tear his own robe in anger and to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus' answer is more ambiguous: in Matthew 26:64 he responds, "You have said so", and in Luke 22:70 he says, "You say that I am".

The Jewish elders take Jesus to Pilate's Court and ask the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to judge and condemn Jesus, accusing him of claiming to be the King of the Jews. The use of the word "king" is central to the discussion between Jesus and Pilate. In John 18:36 Jesus states, "My kingdom is not from this world", but he does not unequivocally deny being the King of the Jews. In Luke 23:7–15 Pilate realizes that Jesus is a Galilean, and thus comes under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod to be tried, but Jesus says almost nothing in response to Herod's questions. Herod and his soldiers mock Jesus, put an expensive robe on him to make him

look like a king, and return him to Pilate, who then calls together the Jewish elders and announces that he has "not found this man guilty".

Observing a Passover custom of the time, Pilate allows one prisoner chosen by the crowd to be released. He gives the people a choice between Jesus and a murderer called Barabbas. Persuaded by the elders (Matthew 27:20), the mob chooses to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Pilate writes a sign in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek that reads "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (abbreviated as INRI in depictions) to be affixed to Jesus' cross (John 19:19–20), then scourges Jesus and sends him to be crucified. The soldiers place a crown of thorns on Jesus' head and ridicule him as the King of the Jews. They beat and taunt him before taking him to Calvary, also called Golgotha, for crucifixion.



Jesus' crucifixion is described in all four canonical gospels. After the trials, Jesus is led to Calvary carrying his cross; the route traditionally thought to have been taken is known as the Via Dolorosa. The three Synoptic Gospels indicate that Simon of Cyrene assists him, having been compelled by the Romans to do so. In Luke 23:27–28 Jesus tells the women in the multitude of people following him not to weep for him but for themselves and their children. At Calvary, Jesus is offered a concoction usually utilized as a painkiller. According to Matthew and Mark, he refuses it.

The soldiers then crucify Jesus and cast lots for his clothes. Above Jesus' head on the cross is Pilate's inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Soldiers and passersby mock him about it. Two convicted thieves are crucified along with Jesus. In Matthew and Mark, both thieves mock Jesus. In Luke, one of them rebukes Jesus, while the other defends him. Jesus tells the latter: "today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). In John, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the beloved disciple John were at the crucifixion. Jesus tells the beloved disciple to take care of his mother (John 19:26–27).

The Roman soldiers break the two thieves' legs (a procedure designed to hasten death in a crucifixion), but they do not break those of Jesus, as he is already dead (John 19:33). In John 19:34, one soldier pierces Jesus' side with a lance, and blood and water flow out. In the Synoptics, when Jesus dies, the heavy curtain at the Temple is torn. In Matthew 27:51–54, an earthquake breaks open tombs. In Matthew and Mark, terrified by the events, a Roman centurion states that Jesus was the Son of God.

On the same day, Joseph of Arimathea, with Pilate's permission and with Nicodemus' help, removes Jesus' body from the cross, wraps him in a clean cloth, and buries him in his new rock-hewn tomb. In Matthew 27:62–66, on the following day the chief Jewish priests ask Pilate for the tomb to be secured, and with Pilate's permission the priests place seals on the large stone covering the entrance. We know that most of the Apostles immediately went into hiding after the Roman authorities arrested Jesus. Only John was with the Master through the long evening and into the terrifying hours of the early morning. Peter had followed the temple guards to the home of Annas, but he returned to the camp at Gethsemane after having denied to the attendants in the courtyard that he was a follower of Jesus. By Saturday night after the crucifixion, the remaining eleven apostles were assembled in secret. The group then left for Galilee and remained there for a short while before returning to Jerusalem, entering the city at night so as not to be seen by the Jewish authorities.

RESURRECTION:

According to the New Testament, after the Romans crucified Jesus, he was anointed and buried in a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea. But God raised him from the dead and he appeared to many witnesses before he ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of Father. Paul the Apostle declared;

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

[1Cor. 15:3–8]

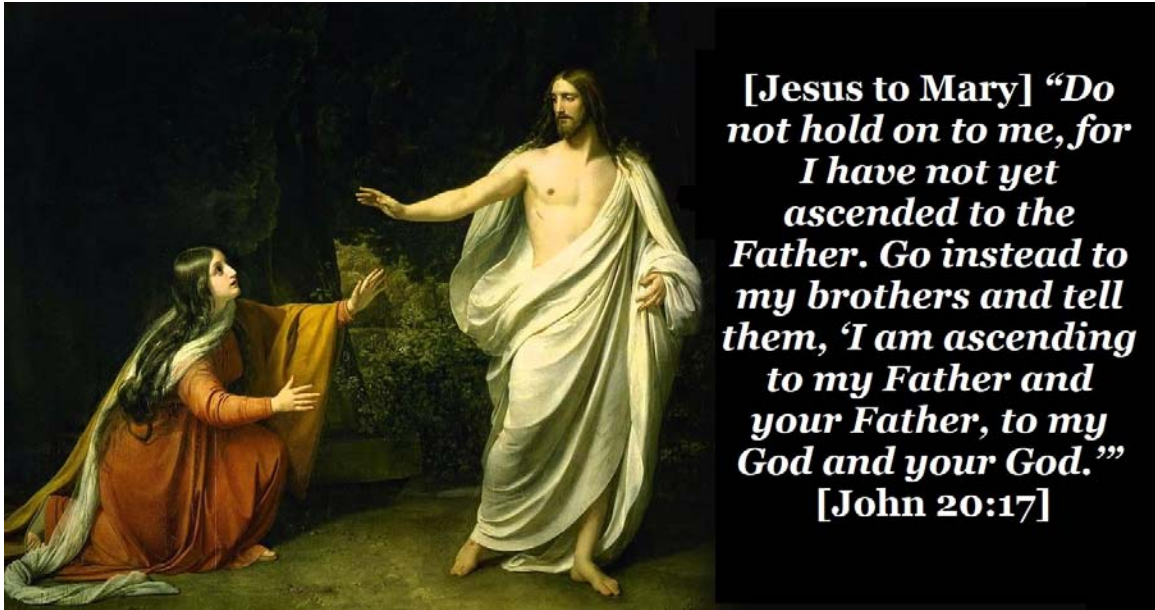
The synoptic gospels agree that, as the evening came after the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, and that, after Pilate granted his request, wrapped it in linen cloth and laid it in a tomb. This was in accordance with Mosaic Law, which stated that a person hanged on a tree must not be allowed to remain there at night but should be buried before sundown. In Matthew, Joseph is identified as also a disciple of Jesus; in Mark he is identified as a respected member of the council (Sanhedrin) who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God; in Luke he is identified as a member of the council, good and righteous, who did not consent to their purpose or deed, and who was

looking for the kingdom of God; and in John he is identified as a disciple of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark states that when Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus's body, Pilate marveled that Jesus was already dead, and he summoned the centurion to confirm this before releasing the body to Joseph. In the Gospel of John, it is recorded that Joseph of Arimathea was assisted in the burial process by Nicodemus, who brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes and included these spices in the burial clothes per Jewish customs.

Although no single gospel gives an inclusive or definitive account of the resurrection of Jesus or his appearances, there are four points at which all four gospels converge:

1. Attention to the stone that had closed the tomb.
2. The linking of the empty tomb tradition and the visit of the women on "the first day of the week."
3. That the risen Jesus chose first to appear to women and to commission them to announce the resurrection to the disciples, including Peter and the other Apostles.
4. The prominence of Mary Magdalene.

In Matthew, there are guards at the tomb. An angel descends from heaven and opens the tomb. All four gospels report that women were the ones to find the tomb of Jesus empty. According to Mark and Luke, the announcement of Jesus' resurrection was made to several women. According to Mark and John, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene (alone in John but accompanied by other women in the Synoptics) goes to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning and is surprised to find it empty. In Mark, Salome and Mary, mother of James, are with Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:1). In the tomb, a young man in a white robe (an angel) tells them that Jesus will meet his disciples in Galilee, as he had told them (referring to Mark 14:28). Despite Jesus' teaching, the Apostles had not understood that Jesus would rise again. In these gospels, especially the synoptics, women play a central role as eyewitnesses at Jesus' death, entombment, and in the discovery of the empty tomb. All three synoptics repeatedly make women the subject of verbs of seeing, clearly presenting them as eyewitnesses. In John, Mary is alone at first, but Peter and the beloved disciple come and see the tomb as well. Jesus then appears to Mary at the tomb.



After the tomb was found empty, the gospels indicate that Jesus made a series of appearances to his disciples. He was not immediately recognizable, according to Luke. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, but she did not recognize him at first. The first two disciples to whom he appeared on the road to Emmaus walked and talked with him for quite a while without knowing who he was (Luke 24:13–32) He was made known "in the breaking of the bread". [Luke. 24:35] When he first appeared to the Apostles in the upper room, Thomas was not present, and he would not believe until a later appearance where he was invited to put his finger into the holes in Jesus' hands and side (John 20:24–29) Jesus then appears to the eleven remaining Apostles in Galilee and commissions them to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Beside the Sea of Galilee, he encouraged Peter to serve his followers (John 21:1–23) His final gospel appearance is reported as being forty days after the resurrection when he was "carried up" into heaven where he sits on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

At a later time, on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus, then the arch-persecutor of the early disciples, was converted to Christ following an extraordinary vision and discourse with Jesus which left him blind for three days. (Acts 9:1–20) Saul later became known as Paul the Apostle. (Acts 13:6) Paul subsequently manifested as one of Christianity's foremost missionaries and theologians.

Such a belief in the death and resurrection of Christ is of central importance to the Christian faith: "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." [1Cor 15:14] There are several places in the four Gospels in which Jesus foretells his coming death and resurrection, which he states is the plan of God the Father. Christians view the resurrection of Jesus as part of the plan of salvation and redemption by atonement for man's sin.

Jesus' ascension into Heaven is described in Luke 24:50–53, Acts 1:1–11 and mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:16. In the Acts of the Apostles, forty days after the Resurrection, as the disciples look on, "he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight". 1 Peter 3:22 states that Jesus has "gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God". Jesus' ascension took place from the Mount of Olives which was close to Bethany. His ascension occurred ten days before Pentecost when his Spirit of truth was poured out upon his believers. Jesus Christ resurrected as a glorified body that had power to transcend the laws of matter, appearing and disappearing at will. His new glorified body did not need food, but he was able of receiving it: "God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen." [Acts 10:40] He was not seen by all the people, but by those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead:

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.
[Luke 24:30,31]

The Acts of the Apostles describes several appearances of Jesus after his Ascension. In Acts 7:55, Stephen gazes into heaven and sees "Jesus standing at the right hand of God" just before his death. On the road to Damascus, the Apostle Paul is converted to Christianity after seeing a blinding light and hearing a voice saying, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). In Acts 9:10–18, Jesus instructs Ananias of Damascus in a vision to heal Paul. The Book of Revelation includes a revelation from Jesus concerning the last days.

PENTACOST:

The term Pentecost comes from the Greek meaning "fiftieth" (50th). It refers to the festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, also known as the "Feast of Weeks" and the "Feast of 50 days" in rabbinic tradition. In Christian tradition, Pentecost refers to the descent of Jesus' spirit of Truth, his promised Comforter, on the first Christians. The biblical narrative of Pentecost is given in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-36 stresses the resurrection and exaltation. In his sermon, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 and Psalm 16 to indicate that first Pentecost marks the start of the new Messianic Age. About one hundred and twenty followers of Christ (Acts 1:15) were present, including the twelve Apostles (Matthias was Judas' replacement) (Acts 1:13, 26), Jesus' mother Mary, other female disciples and his brothers (Acts 1:14).

The Apostle Peter stood up with the eleven and proclaimed to the crowd that this event was the fulfillment of prophecy: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." [Acts 2:17] Peter also mentions that this moment occurred at third hour of the day (about 9:00 am). Peter stated that this event was the beginning of a continual outpouring that would be available to all believers from that point on, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Two remarkable things happened to the disciples after Jesus' ascension. The first is that they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." [Luke 24:52] They were not despondent over the departure of Jesus; they finally understood why he was leaving. The second major impact was an emergent spiritual strength in the lives of these disciples. No longer did they flee like sheep without a shepherd when threatened. Instead, they shook the world to its core as armed with the living truth of Jesus' gospel.

The day of Pentecost immediately impacted Jerusalem. Jesus' enemies believed they had vanquished and eliminated the threat to their institutions and ideologies that the revolutionary teachings of Jesus posed, but Jesus' poured-out spirit of Truth brought a renewed and fresh revelation of a risen Lord. An insignificant group of just over one hundred suddenly grew to several thousand. The true power of Pentecost quickly revealed itself not only the next day, but also by what transpired weeks, months and years following:



Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. [Acts 2:43-47]

No longer did these early Christians strain to obey God's Law as inscribed in stone; Jesus' Comforter brought the Law to the soul-interior of every re-born life, and this new spiritual

consciousness daily revealed itself to the world. Only after Pentecost did the whole range of God's spiritual gifts begin to be exercised through all of God's people who were re-born into the Spirit. It has been said the early Christians preached like a people who had just witnessed the risen Christ. Acts 2:41 records that after Peter spoke to the crowd after receiving Jesus' Spirit, some 3,000 people were baptized: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Only a few of these early Christians had actually seen Jesus in the flesh, but the majority had not. Yet this new Spirit brought Jesus to life once again.