

## **CHRIST IN THE BIBLE**

### **Bread of Life Bible Lessons**

Following the Lord's resurrection, He proved to His disciples that all that had happened to Him had been foretold not only in the other books of the Old Testament, but also in the Psalms (Lu. 24:44). In several other places also, both Jesus and the disciples, specifically mention a prophecy from the Psalms which has been fulfilled or which referred to Christ (see Lu. 20:42; Acts 1:20; 13:33). The Psalms thus provide a rich source of material concerning the Lord.

As we continue our study of Christ in the Bible, a study based on the Lord's statement as recorded in Luke 24:25 - 27, we will be taking several lessons from these references to Christ in the book of Psalms. In each of these lessons, however, our attention will be primarily on the New Testament application of the reference to Christ in the Psalms. Our objective is to see the rich and practical lessons which result from these references.

The prophetic, or Messianic, Psalms are generally divided into two classes. There are those Psalms in which Christ is celebrated in His glory and His kingly reign and dominion are described by images drawn from the earthly theocracy. This is natural since the Messiah was announced to David as a King, as his successor to the throne. Among these are Psalms 2, 45, 72, and 110.

The second class of Psalms are those in which a suffering Messiah is described. While the first class of Psalms speak of Christ as a divine and glorious King and a Priest far above the Levitical priests, they say nothing of the method by which He is to gain His dominion, or as a priest, accomplish His work of atonement. This aspect of the Messiah is taken for granted and Christ is seen as already exalted to glory. In this second class of Psalms, however, the sufferings by which atonement is made and which are rewarded with glorification become the major subject. To this group belong especially Psalms 16, 22, and 40.

Frequently the New Testament writers use an Old Testament example or illustration and apply it to Christ without specifically citing that this was spoken of Him. For example, Paul calls Christ the "first fruits of them that slept" (2 Cor. 15:20). There are many such examples. We must remember two things in this connection. First, Christ spent forty days with His disciples after the resurrection teaching them things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). We can be sure that many of such indirect applications to Christ of an Old Testament figure reflect the things Christ Himself taught. Secondly, Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth. Without a doubt, if Christ Himself did not specifically teach it, these applications were revealed by the Holy Ghost. The point is this: in all cases in the New Testament where an Old Testament figure or expression is applied to Christ, we must realize that the New Testament authors did not write by the will of man but wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

## LESSON 14

## EASTER

### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Matthew 26:1 – 35
Tuesday:	Matthew 26:35 – 56
Wednesday:	Matthew 26:57 – 75
Thursday:	Matthew 27:1 – 32
Friday:	Matthew 27:33 – 66
Saturday:	Acts 2:22 – 36
Sunday:	Matthew 28

### MEMORY VERSE:

**I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).**

### INTRODUCTION:

No event in all history is as important or as significant as the Resurrection. Everything depends on the reality of Christ's resurrection. All the hopes of mankind are bound up in an immortal Saviour who can conquer the effect and penalty of sin. Fortunately, the Resurrection as an historical fact is a well-documented event, one which has the highest degree of proof. Not only was the tomb in which Jesus was securely placed later found to be empty, but He Himself was seen alive by over five hundred witnesses. He also left His disciples with a command and a promise, the fulfillment of which bear out His immortality and life.

### LESSON NOTES:

**An Empty Tomb:** That Jesus was dead and buried in Joseph's sepulchre could not be denied. His disciples (primarily: the brave and faithful women) heard Him cry, "It is finished," and saw His lifeless body slump into death. They participated in preparing His body for burial and tenderly placed it in the tomb. This, in turn, was then sealed tightly shut and a heavy guard placed before it.

Days later, when the women sought to visit the tomb, their primary concern was, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" (Mark 16:3). In addition to the weight of the stone, which would have required at least two or three strong men to move it, there was the sea. Most likely the soldiers had rolled the stone before the opening of the tomb, then passed a strong cord around it, fastening the ends on either side, and covering the knots with balls of wet clay, on which they stamped some official letter or sign. If the grave was disturbed by anyone, this would show it. And it was precisely to prevent the body from being stolen by His disciples that the tomb was sealed in this way and the Roman guards alerted. (Matt. 27:62-65).

The women were met on this "first day of the week" by an angel who announced that "He is risen, as He said" (Matt. 28:6). Many times in His ministry, Christ called attention to the fact that not only must He suffer at the hands of His enemies, but that on the third day He would rise again (see Matt. 20:19; 27:63; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 18:33, etc.). This point was given great prominence in His teaching. He used Jonah as a type of this truth, and His allusions to the temple at Jerusalem convey the same message. The angel pointed to the empty tomb as a proof that His words had come true (Matt. 28:6).

**A Risen Christ:** There are eleven recorded appearances of the Lord after His resurrection. Five of these occurred on the "first day of the week," that first Easter, and a sixth, the following Sunday (see (1) Mk. 16:9; John 20:11-18; (2) Matt. 28:9, 10; (3) Lu. 24:34; (4) Lu. 24:13-31; (5) John 20:19-25; and (6) John 20:26-29). Incidentally, Sunday is a special day in the Christian calendar and is called the "Lord's day" because of the Lord's resurrection on that day of the week. The Lord's day is the weekly commemoration of the great event celebrated annually at Easter. The Day of Pentecost also took place on a Sunday.

Note that the Lord appeared first to women, something which would certainly not have happened as part of a myth or fictitious narrative.

Other appearances of the risen Christ during the next forty days were: to seven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20); to over five hundred disciples in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6); to James alone (1 Cor. 15:7); and finally, to all the apostles at His ascension from the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:6-12). Three times during these forty days Jesus ate and drank with His disciples.

Christ's recorded appearances are not part of a fabricated story. The only fiction in the whole event comes from the Roman soldiers and Jewish authorities. Unable to explain the empty tomb, they concocted a story saying, "His disciples.... stole Him away while we slept" (Matt. 28:13). The elders had to give "much money to the soldiers" to induce them to lie, for Roman soldiers were subject to the death penalty for sleeping at their post. That the Roman soldiers would first admit to a crime which was so serious for a Roman sentinel, and then would also be willing to allow it to be proclaimed shows their utter inability to account for the absence of the Lord's body.

Furthermore, the cowardly disciples who ran and deserted Jesus at the first sign of danger during His life would not be likely to attempt a theft against great odds while He was dead. Not only would it have cost them their lives had they failed, they would not have gained anything by succeeding! It was a risen Christ that made believers out of the disciples.

**A Final Command and Promise:** Easter is a message. The angel had a message for the women; the women carried the message to the disciples; the disciples published the message to the world. Christ is risen! Therein lies the hope of the gospel.

As a final word, the Lord gave His disciples both a command and a promise. The command was to broadcast the gospel message into all the world (Matt. 28:19). This has rightly been called "The Great Commission." It was given not to the powerful as the world sees men but to men devoid of learning, polish, worldly tact, and worldly wisdom. They were to proclaim a lowly Jew, who lived a lowly life and died an ignominious death, as the Saviour of the world and Lord of all. This command is still the command to all believers. Note the message was not only to win disciples but to teach them to observe all things. Obedience to all the teachings of Christ is an integral part of the gospel message.

This command is followed by a promise of Christ's continual presence. Such a promise takes on great meaning when we realize that both the command and promise are based on Christ's having all power and authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18).

**The Lessons:** Jesus represents power. The weakest believe may be confident that in asking to be kept from sin, to grow in holiness, to bring forth much fruit, he may count upon having these petitions fulfilled with divine power.

His presence and power go with us until the "end of the world," the Lord's second coming. Thus He is with us in blessing and in trial, daily guiding our lives in our work-a-day toil. The promise, however, comes after and is contingent upon our obedience to the command. We will experience the truth of this promise as we act upon His Word.

## LESSON 15

### TEACHING IN PARABLES

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Psalm 78:1 – 11
Tuesday:	Matthew 13:24 – 43
Wednesday:	Matthew 13:44 – 58
Thursday:	Matthew 21:28 – 46
Friday:	Matthew 22:1 – 14
Saturday:	Luke 15:1 – 10
Sunday:	Luke 15:11 – 32

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them (Matthew 13: 34).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Parables were a central part of the Lord's ministry. Matthew tells us that Jesus never taught the crowds without using a parable (Matt. 13:34). This means that, in each and every instance in which Jesus taught the people, He illustrated His point through the use of a memorable story. Matthew goes on to say that "He did this in order to fulfill a prophecy given in the Psalms which says, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35; Ps, 78:2). An examination of the context from which this prophecy comes and a brief survey of the use of parables by the Lord will bring forth many lessons.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**A Teaching God:** God is a God of instruction. He deals with His people by teaching them and instructing them in the ways in which they should walk. He has never left man to his own devices but has always sought to instruct him. The Children of Israel could testify that "He instructed" them (Deut, 3.2:10). The Lord tells us through David, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. 32: 8).

God's method of instruction was varied but always simple and understandable to all ages, including children. In fact, it was precisely for the reason of instructing children that God established a "testimony" and a "law" in Israel (Ps. 78:5). For example, one of the primary reasons for the yearly observance of the Passover was that the children might be taught the wondrous works that God had done (Ex. 13:8). This was so they "might set their hope" in Him (Ps. 78:7). Similarly, the monument built to mark the place where Israel crossed the Jordan was specifically built that the children might be reminded of and taught God's great work (Josh. 4:6, 7).

Often in the Old Testament, God had His prophets teach the people by an "acted parable." Thus, Jeremiah is told to break in pieces a potter's vessel that he may foretell the complete destruction of his people (Jer. 19:1-11); he wears a yoke to prophesy their approaching bondage (Jer. 27:2; 28:10); and he redeems a field to show the redemption in store for all the land (Jer. 32:6-15). The whole purpose of this was to make a deep and lasting impression on the people that they might understand God's Word.

In a larger sense, the history of Israel is a "real-life parable" given for our learning (1 Cor. 10:11). This includes the whole Levitical constitution with its outer court, Holy of Holies, high priests, sacrifices, ordinances, etc. (Heb. 9:9). Likewise, the wanderings of the Children of Israel speak to us of our own spiritual progress. Persons such as Abraham, Jonah, and David, no doubt unknown to themselves, lived out a "parable" which foretold an aspect of Christ's life and ministry in a way which teaches us clearly God's purpose (Gal. 4:30; Ps. 32). The point is that the Lord went to great lengths to give us instruction and understanding of Himself and His ways.

Christ and Parables: Christ's teachings also had this hallmark. When it came time to reveal those things which had been hidden from the foundation of the world, God employed a method of teaching by which the unknown could be made known in very simple ways. The Lord was intent on making all His teachings known in their clearest and simplest terms, and also He wanted to make them memorable. Thus Christ used parable to clarify and illuminate His doctrines that all people, no matter what age, culture, or economic level, might understand. He stated His doctrines in the best possible way; and it was not His fault that some hearts were so gross and eyes so blind that they did not understand Him.

Through the use of parables, the Lord clothed all His teachings with flesh and blood. There was nothing abstract. Through real-life situations with which all His listeners could identify, He opened up the treasures of the kingdom. In none of Christ's parables did He violate established laws of nature. There are no speaking trees or reasoning beasts to challenge the imagination as in Aesop's fables or in Greek mythology. The Lord had a much higher purpose for His parables and used only real-life situations for His material.

Parables speak to all languages and all levels of culture. The most backward and nomadic tribesman can understand and relate to the shepherd who seeks the lost sheep and gives his life for his sheep. Sowing seed and reaping a harvest is another basic element of life which is universal and touches all cultures, economic levels, and languages. This is one of the wonders of the gospel--Christ presented His truths in a way which all tribes and nations could understand. The Lord clothed spiritual truths with natural ideas so that all men might learn of God.

The Lessons: Although those teaching younger children will want to emphasize one of the parables and the spiritual lessons taught therein, the main point of this lesson is parables as a method of teaching used by Jesus, and the fact that this was prophesied in the Old Testament and consistent with God's methods and purpose.

Those teaching older ones will want to stress why God chose parables as a method of teaching and what responsibility falls on us who have such clear teachings from these rich parables. As a by-product, teachers and those otherwise employed in communicating God's Word will want to pay particular attention to the Master teacher's techniques and see if there isn't something that can be applied to their own ministry.

Remember that the Psalm from which the quotation in Matthew 13:34 comes was written to warn the people of God against unfaithfulness, by the story of past failure. Note also that the things of the past are in this Psalm recounted for the sake of the children so that they might not make the same mistake (Ps. 78:4-6). Jesus taught in parables so that even children could understand the gospel and that parents might have the means to teach their children the wonders of God. There is nothing in which the Christian family life today is in graver peril than in its neglect on the part of parents to give children systematic instruction in the things of faith. God wants us to recount to our children on a regular basis "His strength, and His wondrous works," that "they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Ps. 78:7). Parables help us to do this.

In reading of all the things God did for the Israelites and of His persistent patience with them, it seems beyond belief that people so led could so soon forget. Yet, is not this a failing to which we are ever so prone? Forgetfulness is a part of our nature, and it wrongs God. It also robs us of one of our most valuable forces in our daily battles. Remembering God's past victories will help us trust for the current one. Parables help us to remember the nature and character of God. But parables are only a help. There is still an effort required of us. We must "take heed how we hear." We must hide God's wonderful Word in our hearts. The Israelites were a "stubborn" and "rebellious" generation. They failed in that their heart was not "aright" and their spirit was not steadfast with God." Forgetting His works, they "refused to walk in His law" (Ps. 78:8-11). Jesus taught in parables so that we would be helped to overcome the failures of these fathers. He taught in parables because He seeks to have us "incline (our) ears to the words of (His) mouth." Parables catch our attention and help us understand. The ultimate objective is that we might have a clear and unclouded concept of His will in order that we might walk steadfastly in His ways.

## LESSON 16

### CHRIST BETRAYED

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Psalm 41
Tuesday:	John 13:1 – 19
Wednesday:	John 13:20 – 35
Thursday:	Matthew 26:1 – 16
Friday:	Matthew 26:47 – 56; 27:3 – 10
Saturday:	Psalm 109
Sunday:	Acts 1:115 – 26

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

One of the greatest mysteries in the Bible is the act of Judas in betraying Jesus. Many different explanations have been offered as to Judas' motives for this crime against his Lord. Some have even tried to explain the betrayal in a favorable light, saying Judas was only attempting to place Jesus in a position which would have forced Him to assert Himself and establish the kingdom they were all expecting. Very little is actually told us of Judas' motives in the Bible. Therefore, all explanations are pure speculation. We do know from the New Testament (John 13:18; Acts 1:16,20) that this treachery was prophesied in Psalm 41 and Psalm 109.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Prophecies:** Both these Psalms are the songs of a man who is in the place of terrible suffering due to the hostilities of his foes. In Psalm 41, it is both friends and foe who are against the author. This Psalm must be read with the knowledge that consideration for the weak or poor is the major subject (vss. 1-3). Apparently, the author lacked this compassion, and he finds both his enemies and his friends rejoicing in his having been stricken down (vs. 8). In this Psalm he confesses his sin and asks for mercy. He wants another chance so that he might treat his enemies differently. (The word "requite" in verse 10 is often used to describe a kind action as opposed to a vindictive one.)

Of particular anguish to the author of this Psalm was the action of his "familiar" and "trusted" friend (vs. 9). This person; who shared the intimate communion of eating with him, a significant act of friendship in eastern cultures, "lifted up his heel against;" him. A friend who is not as loyal in adversity as in prosperity is no friend at all. This is the verse which speaks of Judas. Note that whereas the traitor in the Psalm might be



excused because of the uncompassionate attitude of the one he turned against, the sin of Judas cannot be excused because he turned against Christ without a cause, Psalm 109 has a similar theme in which the singer experiences terrible circumstances due to his enemies' actions. It is very likely that verses 6-19 are a quotation of what this man's enemies say of him rather than he of them. Perhaps there is nothing harder to bear than accusations which are untrue. The author's enemies said terrible things about him and desired horrible things for him. The author, in the midst of these terrible circumstances, cries out to Jehovah and looks to Him to vindicate the oppressed. That which was written by this man's enemies has been applied to Judas (Ps. 109:8; Acts 1:16, 20).

**The Fulfillment:** Psalm 41 gives characteristics of Judas which describe the betrayer as a very close associate and one who was highly trusted. Indeed, Judas was such a man. It must be said in his favor that he was very early drawn to the Lord. He saw in the Lord that which attracted him. From the Lord's point of view, Judas was worthy enough to be selected for the inner twelve. In this role he trained under Christ and was sent out with the twelve to preach the gospel and perform mighty miracles.

Judas was also the treasurer of the group (John 12: 6). . As such, he was the only office-holder among them. It is quite likely that as a Judean, rather than a Galilean, he was more polished than the others and probably had some formal business training. He also was ambitious, a trait not uncommon among all the disciples.

Why Judas would turn against Jesus for a mere thirty pieces of silver (the price of a slave) is hard to guess. It could very well have been for the same reason that Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas saw an opportunity for immediate personal gain as well as favor with the rulers of the Jews. Judas' own early dreams of Christ's kingdom were now losing their luster. Jesus was talking more and more of His death and not His coronation. Opposition to Him was increasing, and the early rush of popular feeling for Jesus was diminishing (John 6:66). Thus Judas bargained to do for the rulers of the Jews what they were feverishly trying to do for themselves but couldn't. He promised to deliver Jesus to them in a way and place that would avoid an uprising of the crowds in the city (Luke 22:2).

**The Lessons:** The last straw as far as Judas was concerned was probably the incident when Jesus rebuked His disciples for their attitude towards the costly ointment used by Mary in anointing Jesus' feet. While Matthew and Mark mention that some or all the disciples murmured against this "waste," John tells us that it was Judas who was specifically outspoken (Mark 14:4,5; Matt. 26:8,9; John 12:4-6). John also says that Judas was a dishonest treasurer who had larceny in his heart. It was immediately after this that Judas, stung by the public rebuke, visits the rulers of the Jews to strike his bargain (Mark 14:10; Luke 22:3 -6).

This is a picture of a man who has not gained the victory over his flesh. We can walk with Jesus, be taught of Him, hold an office for Him, and commune with Him, and still let our flesh rule over us. Unless we see our relationship with Jesus as one where

His Spirit reigns over our wills and affections, we will miss His kingdom just as surely as Judas did.

It is interesting to observe the manner in which Jesus treat Judas during these last days. Jesus knew early in the week that this was His last week on earth (Matt. 26:2). He also knew how He would die and who would betray Him. Yet throughout, Jesus treated Judas with kindness and tact. While Judas was looking for just the right moment to deliver Jesus, Jesus washed Judas' feet along with the other disciples'. Jesus did not treat him differently. During the last supper together, Judas pretended to be close to Jesus but had murder in his heart. Jesus knew this and let Judas know that He knew. Yet He did it in such a tactful way that none of the other disciples were aware of the meaning of the words which passed between Jesus and Judas (John 13:28) Is there not in this a supreme example given by the Master of the kindness and love with which we are to treat even our enemies? Naturally speaking, Christ had no greater enemy than Judas, yet He never showed animosity toward him.

Judas woke up too late to his sin. Better to count the cost beforehand than to repent when it is too late. The name Judas is to day an anathema. One hardly ever hears of a mother naming her son Judas. And Christ's kingdom went on without him. Another was chosen t o fill his spot. If we don't fill in the place God has for us, the loss is ours, not the Lord's . He'll find another to do the job, and His work will go on and triumph. How much better to be the one who fills and fulfills in the place God has for him.

## LESSON 17

### CHRIST AND THE CROSS

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Psalm 22
Tuesday:	John 19:1 – 24
Wednesday:	Mark 15:22 – 39
Thursday:	Psalm 69:1 – 21
Friday:	John 19:25 – 37
Saturday:	Psalm 31
Sunday:	Luke 23:33 – 49

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded (Psalm 22:5).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Although the Gospels devote a considerable portion of their entire narrative to Holy Week (almost one-third) and recount in detail the Crucifixion, their report is for the most part a factual account of the historical events. Their account is written from the viewpoint of an observer, a reporter, who in an honest fashion has sought to present a clear and intimate message. Being observers, however, they could not really give us a glimpse of the suffering of Calvary and the emotions and thoughts of Jesus from His point of view. To see the agony of the cross from Christ's vantage point, we must turn to the Psalms, particularly Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. Here in quite graphic language are the thoughts, the anguish, and the desolate torment felt by Christ on the cross.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**Psalm 22:** Whatever the original experience which prompted this song, Psalm 22 is an exceedingly apt description of Christ's experience during the Crucifixion. So closely has this Psalm been used in connection with the Crucifixion and so closely does its description otherwise parallel the event that it is almost impossible to read it without thinking of Calvary. Christ quoted directly from this Psalm while on the cross in that awful moment of separation from God (Ps. 22:1; Mark 15:34). The parting of His garments is explicitly prophesied (Ps. 22:18; John 19:24) as is the method of His death (Ps, 22:16). The mockery and scorn of the assembled crowd are unmistakable in their description, and these words are virtually quoted in the New Testament to describe the crowd (Ps. 22:7, 8; Mark 15:29; Matt. 27:39, 43).

The Psalm has two major sections or movements. The first section (vss. 1-21) depicts the lonely suffering and desolation of one severely afflicted. The language is exceedingly graphic. Forsaken of God, he is surrounded by bloodthirsty and cruel enemies. The most dreadful sufferings have consumed all his strength, and intense

thirst torments him. (Incidentally, the Lord's comment, "I thirst," was His only reference to His physical suffering.) While hands and feet are pierced, every single member of the body is made to feel its own anguish. Meanwhile, his enemies rejoice at the spectacle and hurl their taunts of scorn and ridicule at him. His garments are parted among them and lots cast for his vesture.

The second section of the Psalm (vss. 22-31) gives us a glimpse of the joy which victory would bring the sufferer. He sees the consequences and benefits flowing from the hand of God through this experience, and he expresses his thankfulness. A great feast shall be celebrated in accordance with his "vows." Rich and poor, as well as heathen from one end of the earth to another, shall come in great numbers to this feast.

**Psalms 69 and 31:** Psalm 69 is very similar to Psalm 22. It describes intense suffering and distress, with the chief agony being that God has seemingly shut His ears to the cry of the sufferer (vs. 3). The sufferer describes himself as helpless, in "deep mire" and overwhelming waters (vss., 1-3). According to the Psalmist, this suffering comes about because of his zeal for God and loyalty to Him (vss. 7-12). As the singer pours out his complaint to God, he describes in detail the brutality of his enemies. He pleads for pity and looks for comforters, but finds none (vs. 20). The only relief he is offered (gall and vinegar) is that which would aggravate his suffering.

Psalm 31 is a song of trust in the midst of great affliction (vss., 6, 7). Jehovah is praised as the refuge of the afflicted. The singer has not been abandoned to his enemies (vs. 8). While the soul struggles with the consciousness of its trial (vss. 9-18), it affirms its trust in Jehovah and sings of victory and gladness. It is from this Psalm that Jesus quoted when He in quiet confidence, at the end of His agonizing experience on the cross, said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (vs. 5; Luke 23:46).

**The Lessons:** We miss much of the meaning of Calvary unless we can understand the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of Jesus while on the cross. Jesus suffered physically as a human being and not as a supernatural robot going through the motions. Jesus was well versed in the Scriptures and used them to express Himself throughout His life. While on the cross, He prayed and expressed His feelings with quotations from the Psalms as people are accustomed to do who are very conversant with the Bible. The language of these Psalms harmonized with and expressed His sentiments. In addition, the internal evidence of these Psalms, particularly Psalm 22, shows the prophetic nature of these Psalms and their applicability to Jesus' final hours.

The agony of the Crucifixion is amply described in the Psalms and cannot be improved upon. Death by crucifixion was a torturously slow process and, we are told, often lasted for as much as four days. In the case of Jesus, we need only point to the hot sun, the raging thirst, and the mocking crowds to give a glimpse of the depth of suffering. And as we contemplate this scene, we must remember that this suffering of the Saviour on the altar of sacrifice was the experience of Him who die in the sinner's place. This simple, yet profound concept, should be stressed to the youngest child. Point out the absolute holiness of Jesus, that He never once in all His life had ever

thought or done anything wrong. Describing the tragedy of Calvary against this background leads to the question of why Jesus died. The answer lies in His great love for sinners and His desire that we might have forgiveness of sins.

Despite the darkness and overwhelming suffering of Calvary, the determination of the Lord was strengthened by His faith in God (which, by the way, sprang directly from His being saturated with the Word of God) and the rewards He saw ahead for all mankind. In both Psalms 22 and 31, there is a bright ray of hope which shines through the darkness. The prospect of declaring God's name among the heathen and of singing His praises among the redeemed ones from all corners of the earth filled the Lord's heart with joy and satisfaction (Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:11, 12). Through the travail, Christ saw this triumph and was able to glorify God and go through.

## LESSON 18

### CHRIST AND THE RESURRECTION

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Psalm 16
Tuesday:	Acts 2:22 – 36
Wednesday:	Mark 15:40 – 16:14
Thursday:	Luke 23:50 – 24:12
Friday:	John 19:38 – 20:18
Saturday:	Matthew 27:57 – 28:15
Sunday:	Acts 13:14 – 37

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:10).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

The resurrection is the soil from which all New Testament teaching springs. It is the foundation of faith. Paul makes this plain when he says, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17). The resurrection gives meaning to, and makes imperative, the whole idea of salvation. It proves that there is a life other than the current human experience and that it is necessary to prepare for that life. In this lesson we will see how the resurrection of Jesus has always been an integral part of the divine plan for man's redemption. Its meaning for us today will also be explored.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Law, Psalms and Prophets:** The source of all the early Christian teaching concerning the resurrection and its relation to the promised Messiah is the Old Testament. They were the only Scriptures available. The Apostles used these Old Testament prophecies and references to prove that the Messiah must rise from the dead. (Acts 17:1-3). The concept of the resurrection was not new to the Jews of the Old Testament. In the miracles of Elijah and Elisha there was indication given that a return from the dead was possible (I Kings 17:17-24; II King 4: 8 -37). Psalm 16 has a veiled reference to the "Holy One" not seeing corruption, while in Daniel 12:2, the first plain expression of the resurrection in the Old Testament is given. During the days of Jesus, the resurrection as a concept was sufficiently accepted to become one of the main issues which separated the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:8). However, nowhere is bodily resurrection specifically attributed to the Messiah in the Old Testament in a way which could be readily perceived. For this reason the cross became a "stumbling block" to the Jews. Even the disciples did not discern the teaching on the Messiah's resurrection from the Old Testament until taught by Christ and that only after it was a reality.

Christ, however, taught of his resurrection both before and after His death and always used the Scripture to show that "thus it must be" (John 2:22). Repeatedly, we find Christ mentioning His resurrection before the fact as something which had to happen as it was written of Him (Mark 8: 31; Luke 18:31). (Note the threefold expression of the disciples' inability to comprehend this plain teaching in Luke 18:34.) On two separate occasions after the resurrection, Jesus "upbraided" His disciples because they failed to see these things that were written of Him (Luke 24:25 - 27; 44-46). According to Jesus' teaching, these references to His resurrection spanned the law, the prophets and the psalms. He also proceeded to illuminate these references to His disciples (vss. 27, 45).

**Peter and Paul:** We can rightfully assume that the Apostles' teaching, preaching and writings on the resurrection, particularly as it interprets the Old Testament, reflects Christ's commentary on these Scriptures. His exposition of these Scriptures laid the foundation for the Apostles. The resurrection became the pivotal point in all their doctrine. And one of the major sources of material on this subject came from The Book of Psalms. Nearly all the New Testament writers refer to the psalms in their teaching on the resurrection.

In The Acts of the Apostles there are twelve major sermons or addresses given by the Apostles to defend or advance their proclamation of the gospel. In all these the resurrection is the central point of argument (Acts 2:~3, 24; 3:14, 15; 4:10; 5: 30,31; 7:56; 10:40; 13:37; 17:2,3; 17:31; 23:6;24:14,15; 28:20). Both Peter on the day of Pentecost, and Paul at the synagogue in Antioch, refer to Psalm 16 specifically as proof that the Messiah was to conquer death itself as part of His triumph.

Psalm 16 speaks primarily of satisfaction, rest and trust (vss. 1, 9). The author who is acquainted with difficulty and who could well have been facing a severe test of his own life, acknowledges his need for preservation, and affirms his trust in God (vs. 1). God has been good to him and has been the answer to his every need providing him with manifold benefits (vss. 5 -7). Because of these benefits and God's promises the Psalmist can "rest in hope." He knows that his "soul" will not be left in hell, nor will God's Holy One be permitted to "see corruption."

The language of the Psalm was unmistakable in its meaning in the days of the Apostles. Hell and corruption were common expressions pertaining to death. The question was to whom did these words apply. Both Peter and Paul point out that it could not possibly mean David, the accepted author of the Psalm, since his body had long since seen corruption (i.e., it had decayed). As proof, his grave was a landmark in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29). Therefore, it could apply only to that royal Seed promised to David whose throne would last forever (Acts 13:33-37).

**The Lessons:** Each time the Apostles used the resurrection in their talks, sermons or writings, they did so in order to underscore some very practical aspect of Christian living and doctrine. Almost every phase of spiritual life is defined, by its relation to the resurrection. For example, the resurrection proved Christ's divine

Sonship (Rom. 1:4); it gave the gospel its truth (Gal. 1:1) and it is the basis on which justification by faith is made available (Rom. 4:25; 5:10).

In terms of everyday life, the resurrection offers the only power for a new life (Eph. 1:18-20; Acts 6:10, 11, 13; 8:2, 11). The resurrection demonstrates the "exceeding greatness" of God's power to change lives. As Dr. Tenney writes in his book, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, "Christianity was not unique because it insured salvation by a sacrifice for sins, nor because it stressed personal ethics, not even because it guaranteed immortality to believers. Its distinctive attribute was the supernatural power of the living God, manifested historically by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." Not even death could confine Christ; He demonstrated that He was bigger and more powerful than the strongest enemy of man. It is this power which works in us to quicken our mortal bodies and makes us live in "heavenly places" (Eph. 2:4 - 6).

Equally important, though not as popular a subject for discussion, is the bearing the resurrection has on the teaching concerning future judgment (Heb. 9:27; II Cor. 5:10). Christ's resurrection gives us assurance of the judgment (Acts 17:31). This resurrection is not only for those who die "in the Lord." It is for both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). The just will inherit the riches of God while the unjust will be paid the wages of sin. God's wrath will be poured out on the ungodly. The wrath of God gives salvation its meaning. Unless we are saved from real peril there is no value to being saved. And the resurrection of Christ is what makes the whole subject meaningful and our relationship to Christ imperative. Only the just will obtain eternal life (I John 1:1, 2). Because He lives, we shall live also (John 14:19).



## LESSON 19

### CHRIST – THE CORNERSTONE

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Psalm 118
Tuesday:	Matthew 21:33 – 46
Wednesday:	Mark 12:1 – 12
Thursday:	Luke 20:1 – 19
Friday:	Acts 4:1 – 14
Saturday:	I Peter 2:1 – 10
Sunday:	Ephesians 2:11 – 22

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner (Psalm 11 8:22) .**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Jesus taught the people of Galilee as " one having authority." It was this characteristic which distinguished Him from the scribes and attracted eager crowds to Him (Matt. 7:29). At the same time this quality aroused the envy of the rulers and scribes and was the cause for which Jesus was crucified (Matt. 27:18). During the first two days of Holy Week, three incidents served to underscore Christ's authority. On Sunday, Christ rode into the capital city as a King. The next day He drove the traffickers out of the temple and cursed the unfruitful fig tree so that it withered (Matt. 21:17-22). These events serve as the backdrop to the scene in the temple where the Lord's authority is challenged (Luke 20:1-8).

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Rejected Stone:** In answer to this question Jesus countered with His own question regarding John the Baptist (Matt. 21:24-27). He then told two parables. One parable was of the two sons (vss. 28 - 32), the other was of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-19).

The major elements of this parable concern themselves with God's ownership of a vineyard. After establishing the vineyard with great care He lets it out to husbandmen (tenants). In return He, as the owner, expected to obtain the fruits of the vineyard. This is denied though many messengers were sent to obtain this for the Master. As a last attempt at obtaining His rightful due, He sent His only Son, who is summarily cast out of the vineyard and slain. The question then is asks "What therefore shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them?" (Luke 20: 15). This sets up the important two-fold answer which Jesus gives to His own question (vs, 16).

First, the Owner will come and destroy the wicked husbandmen. They had shown themselves unworthy of the responsibility given them. Second, and equally important, the Owner, who is still desiring fruit from the vineyard, establishes new

husbandmen in the vineyard. The vineyard and its purpose remain unchanged, only the husbandmen are new.

**The Head of the Corner:** There was absolutely no doubt among the listeners as to who the Lord was speaking of (Mark 12:12). They gasped in horror at the realization (Luke 20:16). To this reaction Jesus responded: "What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is the head of the corner?" (Luke 20:17).

Though the Lord switched metaphors, the two thoughts are parallel and consistent. The Son was rejected by the wicked husbandmen and cast aside as a builder casts aside a stone he feels has no value to his building. Quoting from the prophecy in Psalm 118:22, Jesus completes the picture by declaring that the rejected Stone would be the very cornerstone of the new work to be begun. This new building corresponds in thought to the new husbandmen of the parable.

The Psalm from which this prophecy comes is the sixth and last of the "Hymns of Praise" or Hallel (Psalms 113-118). These Psalms were sung by the Hebrews at Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Undoubtedly, they were sung by the Lord and His disciples later in the week of the above incident, on the night He was betrayed (Matt. 26: 30). The song is one of perfect victory in which Israel, Aaron, and all the people are admonished to praise God for His triumph.

**The Lessons:** In the Old Testament the vineyard and the vinestock were frequently used as images of the kingdom and nation of Israel (Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; 27:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10). This is one of the reasons the Jews understood the meaning of Christ's parable so readily. While this imagery is used in the New Testament (John 15), the terminology of Psalm 118:22 is elaborated upon by the New Testament writers. Peter particularly expressed the work of God today as the building of a "spiritual house" in which all believers are the lively (living) "stones" and Christ, that rejected Stone, the chief Cornerstone of the building (I Pet. 2:5-7. To the "rulers of the people and elders of Israel" he makes Christ's teaching in the temple very pointed (Acts 4:8, 11). Then in his epistle to the believers, Peter stresses that the purpose of the "spiritual house" is to offer up spiritual sacrifices (i. e., fruit) acceptable to God (I Pet. 2:5).

The failure of the husbandmen in the parable was in not giving fruit to God. The fruit expected was obedience, sincere worship, righteous living, growth and teaching the nations about the true God. He expects the same from us. Note that the tenants of the vineyard could also enjoy the fruits of their labor. The more they produced for the owner, the more they enjoyed themselves. So it is in the matter of our "spiritual sacrifices." All that pleases God blesses us. The more we bring to God, the more abundant and delightful our own reward. He never "muzzles the ox that treadeth out the corn."

Again in Ephesians 2:20, we have the use of the expression "the chief cornerstone." And again the usage corresponds entirely to the point that "Jesus made

in the parable. Written to Gentiles, it refers to them as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (vs. 12). We, the Jew and Gentile New Testament believers, are the "others" to whom the vineyard has been given. This was accomplished through the blood of Christ through which we become "fellow citizens .. of the household of God" (vss. 13, 19). The foundation of this household is the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 3:11) and the ministry of the Apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). Collectively, this building, made up of Jesus Christ Himself, the Apostles, prophets, and each individual believer "grow" into "an holy temple in the Lord" (vs.21). We become an "habitation of God through the Spirit" (vs. 22). Some self-examination is in order here. Do I really "fit" in with the other members of this building as I ought to, or do I live unto myself? Am I doing my part to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? (Eph. 4:3). Am I , as an individual, living up to my responsibility as a temple of God? Does God feel comfortable in this temple? If our answers are anything but yes, we ought to go to our Head, and ask for the help to be what God desires us to be. God will not tolerate unfruitfulness (John 15:2).

## LESSON 20

### CHRIST –BORN OF A VIRGIN

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 7
Tuesday:	Luke 1:26 – 38
Wednesday:	Luke 1:39 – 56
Thursday:	Matthew 1
Friday:	Luke 2:1 – 20
Saturday:	Luke 2:21 – 40
Sunday:	John 1:1 – 14

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1:23).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Ever since God's promise to Adam and Eve as found in Genesis 3:15, the hopes for mankind's redemption rested in "the seed of the woman." It was to be a human being, born in the same manner as all humans, who would bring deliverance to man. In the promise to Abraham, a nation, or race, of people was identified as the one through whom this Person would be born (Gen. 22; 18). This was supported by similar promises to Isaac and Jacob. Through Jacob's prophetic word, the tribe of people was identified (Gen. 49; 10). And to David, the family of the Saviour was revealed (II Sam. 7:12-16). Gradually the picture began to come into clearer focus as God continued to reveal His plan. To Isaiah, another important aspect of the Saviour's birth was revealed (Isa, 7).

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Sign:** During the reign of Ahaz, Syria and Israel were waging war with Judah. Destruction seemed certain and the people's heart, as well as the king's, were "moved" (Isa, 7:2). God was anxious to deliver His people, but they under the leadership of Ahaz refused to trust in God. Isaiah, accompanied by his son, was sent specifically to Ahaz to give him God's promise of deliverance (vss. 3-9).

It should be noted that Ahaz' fear of destruction violated the great promise which the house of David held so dear. It was the descendants of David, the family through whom the Messiah was to come, who were threatened with destruction by Pekah and Rezin. If this people were destroyed, God's promise could not be fulfilled. This is what was at stake in the encounter between Ahaz and Isaiah. This is why God dealt so strongly with the unbelief of this stubborn king. To Isaiah it was absolutely impossible that the people and family through whom the promise of a Saviour would be fulfilled could be brought to ruin. Even the presence of Isaiah's son, a detail specifically arranged by God though he seemingly plays no part in the story (v s, 3) , served to remind Ahaz that God's promise would not fail. Shearjashub, whose name means

"a remnant will repent," or "will return," was a reminder that God would preserve His people.

God even condescended to the weakness of Ahaz' faith and offered to back up His Word with a sign, but Ahaz refused to believe (vss. 10-12). God then gave him a sign despite his unbelief (v s, 14). While it is possible that a child with the name Immanuel was born in Ahaz' day to prove to Ahaz the power of God, its real fulfillment took place in Jesus (Matt. 1:23).

**The Saviour:** Matthew, after having related the miraculous conception of Christ, says specifically: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (Matt. 1:22, 23). According to him the prophecy applied directly to Mary the mother of Jesus. This young, unmarried woman, bore the Child who was the fulfillment of all the prophecies since the fall of man.

Matthew makes it quite clear that Mary was a virgin in the strictest sense of the word. That which was conceived in her was truly of divine origin. It was the result of the supernatural intervention of God in the course of human history.

Mary received little glory from this role during those days. She faced the suspicion of her "husband," and no doubt was a scandal among her neighbors. In fact, Joseph did suspect her, and would have "divorced" her but for a divine revelation which he received (Matt. 1:19-21). Later rabbinical books accuse Mary of a violation of her marriage vows, and it would appear from the innuendoes of Christ's accusers that this charge was secretly whispered in His own lifetime (John 7: 27; 8:41). But God had foretold this birth hundreds of years earlier by Isaiah, and it had to come to pass.

**The Lessons:** Jesus was the eternal Son of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth (John 1:1-3). But in order that He might be the Saviour of men it was necessary that He should partake of human nature, and be born as man is born (Heb. 1:14-18). This physical body provided for the Son of God was supernaturally begotten by God Himself. The virgin birth is evidence that Jesus was God's only beloved Son.

Mary sang a song of praise during her visit with Elisabeth which reveals much of the type of person Mary was, as well as her discernment concerning that which she was bearing at the time. The whole hymn shows a mind so full of the sacred Scriptures that her utterance becomes the echo of many of the prophets of the Old Testament. This was the moment in history towards which all the prophets looked and Mary rejoiced in this revelation (Luke 1:46 -55). Notice the emphasis on the might and omnipotence of God (vss. 49, 50). These words mean that it is not impossible for the Creator to become a creature; it is not impossible for the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, to be born in time; it is not impossible that the Divine and the human should be so united as that God and man should be one. It is within the power of God to bring these things about.

Note also the praise for God's fulfillment of His promises (vss. 54, 55). The whole history of Israel from the beginning was one continued record of what God had made them, and what God had done for them. God helped in "remembrance of His mercy." God's promises to His people are all mercies. God is always looking to help His people. He is wanting to give us the help to be better and holier members of His kingdom. That is what He is after and why He has gone through all the effort to send Jesus Christ to us in the flesh. God has given us many great and precious promises to enable us to become partakers of the divine nature. His promises never fail, and He has all power in heaven and in earth to bring about their fulfillment.

## LESSON 21

### CHRIST –THE BRANCH

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 11: 1 – 10
Tuesday:	Romans 15:1 – 13
Wednesday:	Jeremiah 22:24 – 23:6
Thursday:	Matthew 2
Friday:	Jeremiah 33:7 – 26
Saturday:	Zechariah 3
Sunday:	Zechariah 6

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an en sign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (Isaiah 11:10).**

#### INTRODUCTION

When Ahaz refused to accept God's offer of deliverance as given through Isaiah (see fast week's lesson), he was left to his own devices. Isaiah had warned Ahaz that the nation to which he looked for help (the Assyrians) in this threat from Syria and Israel would ultimately invade the land and lay it waste (Isa. 7:17-25). Unimpressed, Ahaz sent an embassy with large presents to the king of Assyria. Although Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) were unable to take Jerusalem in their subsequent attack, they did do great damage to the land, and a great part of its inhabitants were taken into captivity (II Chron. 28:5-1.5; II Kings 15:29). Assyria proved no help at all, and the supposed deliverance, bought at such a heavy price, brought only "distress" (II Chron. 28:16-21). This dependence on Assyria formed the first link in that chain which, partly by the Assyrians and partly by their successors, the Babylonians, fell upon the kingdom of Judah.

#### LESSON NOTES:

The Branch: In Isaiah 10:5- 35, the Lord, through His prophet, speaks to the Assyrian king. Tilgath-pilneser is puffed up because of his triumphs, primarily his power over Judah (vs, 13). God had merely used him, however, as an instrument to chastise His rebellious people (vss. 5, 25). The Lord promises him that he will suffer a terrible overthrow (vss. 17, 34). This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in the days of Hezekiah (Isa, 37). .

The prophecy continues in Isaiah 11 and is directed towards the house of David and intended for their encouragement. In the last verse of Isaiah 10, the Assyrians had been compared to a magnificent forest which should be cut down by the hand of Jehovah. Here (Isa. 11) the house of David appears as a tree which had been felled, from whose roots a small shoot would spring forth, and, insignificant at first, would grow

up to a stately tree. Then follows, in highly figurative language, the attributes of the King (vss. 2-5), and the nature of His kingdom (vss. 6-10).

In at least four other places, the promised seed of David is called "the Branch." Jeremiah uses this designation twice (J e r. 23:5; 33:15) as does the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Jeremiah's prophecy comes in connection with his declaration that Judah would be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar (22:25). In particular, he cries out against the leaders of the people, their "shepherds" (23:1, 2). God then promises through Jeremiah to return the people to their land and to establish shepherds over them who would truly "feed" them (vs. 4). In this connection the offspring of David is presented to them as their Ruler and Leader. He is the "righteous Branch," a King who will reign and prosper (vss. 5, 6) This prophecy is virtually repeated in the same way in Jeremiah 33:7- 26 where David's seed is called a "Branch of righteousness."

**A Nazarene:** The statement in Matthew 2:23 has perplexed many students of the Bible. Here Matthew tells us that many prophets prophesied that the Saviour would be called a Nazarene. No single Old Testament passage can be found to correspond exactly to this. Yet, Matthew uses the plural indicating that more than one prophet referred to Christ as the Nazarene. This is the only such instance where the plural is used.

The answer to this seems to lie in the root meaning of the Hebrew name "Nazareth." Its root meaning is "Branch." Since "the Branch" is used by several prophets, undoubtedly these are the prophecies which Matthew says are fulfilled in Jesus.

**The Lessons:** It is of great interest and importance to study those characteristics which the prophets ascribe to this "Branch" from the root of Jesse. Chief among these attributes is righteousness. Jeremiah calls Him Jehovah-tsidkenu: the Lord our Righteousness. Isaiah tells us He will judge "righteously," and His kingdom shall be one of peace. This fits in perfectly with the statements of Jesus wherein He told His hearers that unless their righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the Pharisees they could not see the Kingdom of God. Also in Romans 14:17, the definition of Christ's kingdom is given as "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Zechariah combines several Old Testament functions and offices into the work of "the Branch" (Zech. 6:12, 13). First of all, He is to build the temple of the Lord. This work is accomplished through those redeemed souls who collectively make up the habitation of the Lord. Next, He is to rule upon the throne as a King. In addition, He is to be the priest upon His throne. These two functions of king and priest had never been combined in any Old Testament character with the exception of Melchizadek, who is a foremost type of Christ (Heb. 5:6). And again the outstanding characteristic of His rule is peace (Zech. 6:13).

One detail often overlooked in connection with these prophecies is the small and inconspicuous way in which this Branch was to appear. Growing up as a rod out of the



stem of Jesse and a Branch out of his roots speaks of a small and humble beginning. Ezekiel 17:22, 23 paints a similar picture indicating that before the Messiah should attain to glory, He would be lowly and obscure. This finds its fulfillment not only in the circumstances of Christ's birth but in the manner in which the whole kingdom of God began its growth. It was the poor and despised of the world who made up the "temple" of the Lord. The foolishness of the world was used to confound the wise. The world took little notice of what was happening. Yet those who had ears to hear and eyes to see were aware of the grandeur of this coming kingdom. God's promises will be fulfilled and the kingdoms of this earth will become the kingdom's of our Lord and of His Christ, regardless of how we may interpret conditions today or what the world thinks and does.

## LESSON 22

### CHRIST –THE LIGHT

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 9:1 – 7
Tuesday:	Matthew 4:12 – 25
Wednesday:	John 1:35– 51
Thursday:	John 2:1– 12
Friday:	John 4:43– 54
Saturday:	Luke 2:25– 39
Sunday:	John 1:1– 9

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12)**

#### INTRODUCTION:

In the time of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the ten northern tribes seceded from Judah and built their own independent nation. Jeroboam, their first king, set up golden calves as representative of God to keep his people from worshipping at Jerusalem. Ahab and Jezebel brought Baal-worship to the ten tribes to further alienate them from God. Many prophets, including Elijah and Elisha, ministered to the northern kingdom. Judgment finally fell upon them in the form of the Assyrian who invaded the land and carried many of the Israelites captive. The Assyrians moved other inhabitants into the conquered area. So it became a land of mixed nationalities: Galilee of the nations.

In the days of Jesus, this area included two of the three provinces which made up Palestine: Samaria and Galilee. The population of Galilee was more than half Gentile. The speech of the Jewish Galileans was a dialect despised by the more pure-blooded Jews of Judea, the other province of Palestine. It was to "Galilee of the nations," the area formerly of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, that Isaiah prophesied the great light would appear. Also, it was fitting that Jesus should begin His ministry in an area where Jews and Gentiles lived, for He was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of ... Israel"

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Light Shines in the Darkness:** "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth" (Luke 1:26). From Nazareth of Galilee Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. After the flight to Egypt, the family returned again to Nazareth in Galilee where "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

After His baptism and temptation, Jesus returned to Galilee. The city of Capernaum became His home base. In Cana of Galilee, Jesus performed His first miracle. Jesus and His disciples had been invited to a wedding. Perhaps it was the wedding of one of the disciples. There, when the wine ran out, Jesus made the water into wine. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory" (John 2:11).

After a visit to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, Jesus returned into Galilee by way of Samaria (see John 4:3). The Galileans received Him. While again in Cana, a certain nobleman came from Capernaum and asked Jesus to come and heal his son. Jesus directed him to go his way and promised that his son would be well. At that very moment, according to the testimony of the nobleman's servants, the boy began to recover. "This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee" (John 4:54).

In Galilee Jesus preached His first sermon. From Galilee He called His disciples. On the shores of the sea of Galilee He taught the people. In Galilee He fed the five thousand. In Galilee Jesus taught "the sermon on the mount." How perfectly the prophecy was fulfilled! "By the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isa. 9:1-2).

**Light or Darkness:** Jesus told Nicodemus that the condemnation of the world was that "light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). But there were some who came to the light and walked in the light. Philip and Nathaniel, Andrew and Peter, James and John left their houses on the shores of Galilee and followed the Light of the World. After Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana, "his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). When Jesus healed the nobleman's son, "himself, believed and his whole house" (John 4:53).

Most of the religious leaders refused the light. When Jesus preached His first sermon in Nazareth, they became so angry that they attempted to kill Him. His ministry in His native area was limited because of the unbelief of those who knew His family (Mark 6:1-6). The Lord vehemently warned the cities of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum of judgment because they did not repent when they saw the mighty works of the Son of God.

John the Baptist's witness was instrumental in causing Andrew to follow Jesus. John bore witness of the Light (John 1:7, 8). Andrew brought Peter to Jesus; Philip brought Nathaniel. James and John also followed Jesus the Light of the World. So the Light shone in the darkness and was largely unrecognized, but those who did recognize and believe in Jesus as the Messiah did not continue in darkness but received the light of life (John 1:5; 3:21; 8:12).

**The Lessons:** The Light of the World is shining today wherever the gospel is being preached. Our response to that gospel determines our eternal destiny. If we come to the light and walk in the light, we can look forward to dwelling in the glorious

light of God forever. But if we avoid the light of the gospel and despise the teaching and preaching of the Word of God which reveals our faults, we are in danger of eternal darkness and damnation.

It is clear from the warnings of Jesus to the cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin that the proper effect of mighty works and signs and wonders is repentance from sin. The crowd was willing to acclaim Jesus king when He fed them miraculously, but Jesus looked for true repentance. The signs and wonders which we see and hear of today should have the same effect. They should bring us to repentance.

Since we were once in darkness but have become enlightened through Jesus our Lord, we must walk in the way of light (Eph. 5:8). The child of God must separate himself from worldly pleasures and entanglements and live in the clear, bright light of obedience to the teachings of Jesus, the Light of the World.

## LESSON 23

### THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 40:1 – 11
Tuesday:	Luke 3:1 – 18
Wednesday:	Matthew 3
Thursday:	Mark 1:1 – 11
Friday:	John 1:19 – 34
Saturday:	John 3:23 – 36; 5:33 – 35
Sunday:	Acts 13:14 – 26

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

When Cain was born, Eve thought that she had brought forth the promised redeemer (Gen. 4:1). This was not so, but the promise was renewed and made more specific over and over again throughout the Old Testament times. Isaiah was the first to prophecy of a forerunner to the Messiah (Isa. 40:3). This forerunner was to prepare the way for the anointed of God. He would be a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for the glory of the Lord to be revealed.

Malachi also prophesied of this one who was to prepare the way for the messenger of the new covenant. The Old Testament close with the promise that God will send Elijah the prophet before the day the Lord (Mal. 4:5)

#### LESSON NOTES:

**The Person of John:** An angel promised the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and Elisabeth who were past the age for having children. The angel also gave the promised son his name: John. He was to be "great In the sight of the Lord." Strong drink and wine were forbidden him but he was to be "filled with the Holy Spirit even from mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). All those acquainted with the facts of John's birth wondered what manner of child he would be (Luke 1:66).

About thirty years later, after spending considerable time the wilderness, John began his .ministry (Luke 1:80). He preached repentance from sin to an ever-increasing congregation of Jews (Matt.:3:5). He wore coarse camel skin with a leather belt and fed on wild honey and locusts in striking contrast to the ornately clothed Pharisees who loved feasts (Matt. 3:4; Luke 20:46). His preaching was so effective and his ministry so successful that the Pharisees sent representatives to him demanding to know who he was (John 1:19). The general public also mused in their hearts whether John was the Messiah or not (Luke 3:15). He "confessed and denied not; but confessed I am not the

Christ" (John 1:20). He explained that though he was baptizing with water, a mightier one was coming who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16).

The priests pressed John further, "What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No" (John 1:21). When they insisted on an answer for those who sent them, John declared, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:23; Isa. 40: 3).

Later, when some of John's disciples were jealous for John because of Jesus' popularity, he declared, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Jesus subsequently asserted that "among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Jesus also told His disciples that if they could receive it, John was Elijah which was to come (Matt. 11:14; Mal. 4:5). The Apostle Paul in his first recorded sermon declared unequivocally that John had fulfilled his course.

**The Message of John:** The great burden of the Baptist's message was repentance. The Messiah was already among them and would soon be manifested. Therefore, in preparation for His appearance, everything crooked should be made straight. His baptism signified a complete break from the former manner of life. John's ministry was very effective. All Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear him (Matt. 3: 5). Many were baptized by him. John's message was a relevant message. He warned the Pharisees who came to his baptism to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" (Matt, 3:8). In a remarkable departure from the popular doctrine, John told the Pharisees that their descent from Abraham was of little value, but that God was able to raise up children of Abraham from the very stones on Jordan's bank (Matt. 3:9).

In all his emphasis on the imminent coming of the Messiah, John retained a relevant message for daily life. He exhorted the people to generous acts of charity (Luke 3: 11). The tax collectors he admonished to "exact no more than that which is appointed" (Luke 13). His advice to the soldiers was to avoid violence, to accuse no man falsely, and to be content with their wages (Luke 14). It is astonishing that soldiers should even come to hear him.

When Jesus himself came to be baptized, John protested. But Jesus affirmed, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Thereafter John pointed his disciples to Jesus, "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His course was fulfilled. He was content to fade into obscurity created by the One whose way he had come to prepare. "This my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

**The Lessons:** Preparation was necessary before the Lord's earthly ministry. John, full of the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb was sent to accomplish that preparation. In like manner today, the Lord has raised up Spirit-filled vessels to prepare the way for the second triumphant coming of our Lord to the earth.

John's message was extremely simple and practical. It is important for us to maintain the simplicity of the gospel. Our message relates to the life now as well as to that in eternity. Pleasing our Lord in holy living and acceptable service is our true preparation for His second coming. Let us be careful not to lose the practical message in a fantastic preoccupation with the manner of the Lord's return.

The angel said John should not drink wine nor strong drink, but he would be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15). Paul used the same comparison in his letter to the Ephesians: "Be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This, in connection with Paul's teaching that drunkards cannot enter the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21), and his plea to avoid stumbling a brother (Rom. 13:21; 1 Cor. 8:13) form the Biblical basis for total abstinence from wine and strong drink. There is at least the subtle suggestion that imbibing strong drink and being filled with the Holy Spirit are contrary one to the other. We do well to follow the example of John whom Jesus called "a burning and a shining light" (John 5: 35).

## LESSON 24

### CHR1ST - THE PREACHER

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 61
Tuesday:	Luke 4:14 – 32
Wednesday:	Matthew 11:1 – 19
Thursday:	John 4:6 – 26
Friday:	Isaiah 42:1 – 16
Saturday:	Luke 2:8 – 35
Sunday:	Matthew 4:17 – 25

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek (Isaiah 61:1a).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Webster's Dictionary defines the verb "preach" to expound or proclaim in public. The gospel begins with the preaching of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4) and ends with the great commission to preach the gospel to every creature. The ministry of Jesus is divided into three categories: teaching, preaching, and healing (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). In his grand poem of the Messiah (ch, 40-66), Isaiah prophesies of the preaching of the Christ. Those prophecies and the manner of their fulfillment are the subject of this lesson.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**Anointed to Preach:** Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit of the Lord God would be upon the Christ and that He would preach good tidings to the meek (poor). When Jesus was baptized in Jordan by John, the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Jesus, and after the temptation in the wilderness Jesus began immediately to preach: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt. 3:16; 4:17). This was the message of John the Baptist. Christ took up and continued that ministry.

In Nazareth, the town of his youth, Jesus preached His first recorded sermon. He attended the synagogue on the Sabbath, and when He was given the opportunity to read and minister, He read from Isaiah 61. So different was His exposition and application of this prophecy of the Messiah that the congregation was stunned. They never associated the ministry of the Messiah with good tidings to the poor, healing to the sick, and relief to the oppressed. The "acceptable year of the Lord" (year of Jubilee) to them had always meant restoration to national supremacy. This was a new doctrine to them. "This day," Jesus proclaimed, "is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). They marveled at the gracious words He spoke (Luke 4:22). But they could not accept Him because of their familiarity with His family. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they asked (Luke 4 :22). So He came very literally to His own, and His own received Him not.



They became so angry when He upbraided them for their unbelief that they attempted to take His life (Luke 4:29).

When John the Baptist, while unjustly imprisoned by Herod, heard of the works of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples to find out for sure whether Jesus was indeed the promised Christ (Matt. 11:3, 4). Instead of answering their question directly, Jesus told them to tell John what they saw and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and to the poor the gospel is preached (Matt. 11:5). John's assurance was to be based on the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

**Gracious Words . . . With Power:** The preaching of Jesus was full of mercy and truth. He proclaimed liberty from enslavement of sin, release from the punishment due breakers of the law. He proclaimed a Father who loved His children and even victory over the king of terrors--death. These were indeed gracious words. Little wonder then that the common folk heard Him gladly. His words were a comfort to the oppressed and poor. His preaching created hope both for this life and for the life to come.

But His words were not a politician's empty promises. Not only were His promises great, but the demonstration of the reality of those promises was equally great. Did He promise a glorious resurrection to His followers? He demonstrated His authority to fulfill that promise by raising Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son from the dead here. Did He offer the forgiveness of sins? He showed His authority to forgive sin by eradicating the consequences of sin and healing the young paralytic (Matt. 9:2,6).

Jesus requested those whom He healed not to advertise Him (Matt. 12:16). This aversion to publicity was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen . . . I will put my Spirit upon him, . . . "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets (Matt. 12:18, 19). Jesus did not publicly proclaim Himself King and demand to be followed. He did not assert Himself.

Neither did Jesus resist those who opposed Him. His patience and long suffering are beyond compare. Surely it was in His power to cut off and destroy those who opposed and threatened Him. But He came to save men's lives, not to destroy them (Luke 9:56). "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isa. 42: 3). The wisdom of this policy is made evident by the conversion of many who had opposed Him. On the Day of Pentecost and shortly thereafter, thousands turned to the Lord, and even a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7).

**The Lessons:** The preaching of Jesus is certainly a safe example to follow. We note that He took the book and read a passage. Good preaching is always based on the Bible. Stories and illustrations have their place if they illumine the Scripture. It is God's Word that does not return void, not man's.

Note also the positive tone of Christ's preaching. He had something to proclaim: deliverance from the terrible enslavement to Satan in all its varied forms both in this life and the next! This is still the gospel message. The very word gospel means glad tidings. Good preaching should inspire hope, not despair.

Also, the Lord's preaching was relevant. It was for right now. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Though certainly the study of heaven and hell has its place, good preaching must be practical enough to be of value right now. To proclaim the help of the Lord for life is of more value than instruction for death. To threaten a congregation with death is next to useless, but to teach them how to live will bring great reward.

Finally, the Lord's patience in not breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax is an admirable example to imitate. With patience and love, many who are far from "on fire" or "strong in the Lord" will yet become so. It is wise not to give up on any of the souls God sends our way. With God all things are possible.

## LESSON 25

### CHRIST - THE HEALER

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 53
Tuesday:	Matthew 8:1 – 17
Wednesday:	Matthew 9:18; 20– 35
Thursday:	Luke 8:1 – 3; 13: 11– 17
Friday:	John 5:1 – 16
Saturday:	John 9:1 – 11
Sunday:	Luke 9:37 – 42; 18:35 – 43

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses (Matthew 8:17).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Sickness and death found their way into God's creation through the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just as God had a plan for the forgiveness of sin, so also, God had a plan for the healing of sickness which was the result of sin. To the Israelites, just out of Egypt, God revealed Himself as "The Lord that healeth" (Ex. 15:26). Because of man's estrangement from God, healings in Old Testament times were comparatively few.

Isaiah foresaw the day when God's Messiah would take upon Himself the sins and the sicknesses of the people. When God in the person of Jesus dwelt among His people, His healing power was manifested as never before.

#### LESSON NOTES:

**Healing in Christ's Atonement Foretold:** From chapter 40 to 66, the book of Isaiah is a poem of the Messiah. This "Song of Messiah" is divided into three sections of nine chapters each. These sections are also subdivided into three smaller sections of three chapters. The central chapter in this grand poem is chapter 53, beginning with chapter 52:13. So the central stanza of this Messianic poem consists of verses 4, 5, and 6 of chapter 53. These verses are truly the central theme of the gospel. This chapter foretelling the sufferings of Christ is often referred to as The Atonement Chapter because it describes prophetically the atoning work of Jesus and all which that work means to us. Included in this work of atonement is the healing of sickness and the forgiveness of sin.

While describing the healing ministry of Jesus, Matthew explains that it was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4. Matthew by inspiration of the Spirit, uses the words "infirmities" and "sickness" in the place of Isaiah's "grief and sorrows." So we have the assurance of the inspired Word that "Himself took our infirmities and bare our

sicknesses," just as surely as "He was wounded for our transgressions." We stand on just as sure ground when we trust Christ for healing as when we trust Him for the forgiveness of our sins.

**Healing in Jesus' Ministry:** Twice in Matthew, Jesus' ministry is summarized as teaching, preaching, and healing (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). Peter preached to Cornelius of "Jesus of Nazareth ... who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). Clearly, healing was an important part of Jesus' ministry. It drew the multitudes together to hear His teaching and preaching. There is no record that a single individual was denied healing when he applied to Jesus. Descriptions of twenty-six healings are recorded in the Gospels. Twelve are covered in the daily readings for this week. The healings cover ailments, from the fever of Peter's mother-in-law to the healing of a man born blind, Jairus' daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus were raised from the dead by Christ the Healer! A paralytic, a lunatic, a deaf mute, a blind beggar, all were perfectly delivered by the Savior. The Lord used several different methods of administering deliverance. In some cases, He touched the suffering ones and they were made whole. Sometimes He took them by the hand, as in the case of Jairus' daughter and Peter's mother-in-law. Twice He used spittle, once mixed with clay. Sometimes He simply spoke the word. On several occasions, we read how He healed all who came, and it is clear that we have only a minute fraction of His healing miracles recorded in the Gospels.

**Healing in the Name of Jesus:** Twice during His earthly ministry Jesus sent out disciples to heal the sick and preach the Kingdom. Once the twelve were sent out, and on another occasion seventy were sent two by two to do likewise. They returned with glowing reports that even the devils were subject to them. Before Jesus was taken up from them into heaven, the Lord gave His disciples the great commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "In my name," Jesus promised, "shall they cast out devils;... they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover (Mark 16:17,18). After Jesus' ascension, the ministry of healing was continued by the apostles in the name of Jesus. Peter makes a special point to explain that the lame man at the gate Beautiful received his healing in the name of Jesus. This ministry continues in force to this day. In the name of Jesus their Lord, His followers have the privilege to pray for and lay hands on-the sick.

**The Lessons:** Ten times in the Gospels, we read that Jesus was moved with compassion. In order to help a suffering world, it is necessary to feel this emotion of compassion. We are commanded to "bear one another's burdens" and also to "pray one for another that ye "may be healed." We do well to give ourselves to a ministry of compassion, and not pray solely for ourselves.

Since the Lord has included the healing of our sicknesses in the Atonement which He accomplished at Calvary, we ought to avail ourselves of this blessing. In fact, it is impossible to escape the logic that if it is not proper to seek forgiveness of sins outside of the Atonement, it also follows that the proper place for the believer to find healing is at the same cross of Christ, the Healer of souls and bodies.

## LESSON 26

### CHR1ST - THE TEACHER

#### DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 28:9 – 17
Tuesday:	Matthew 5:1 – 16
Wednesday:	Matthew 5:17 – 32
Thursday:	Matthew 5:33 – 48
Friday:	Matthew 6:1 – 18
Saturday:	Matthew 6:19– 34
Sunday:	Matthew 7

#### MEMORY VERSE:

**And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people (Matthew 9:35).**

#### INTRODUCTION:

Part of the Levites' duty was to teach the people the law of God (Lev. 10:11). When Jehoshaphat sent Levites throughout the cities of Judah to teach the law of God, a revival resulted, and the kingdom prospered (II Chron. 17:7-10). Teaching holds a high place in the ministry of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). The most important qualification that a teacher must have is that he is an example of his own teaching (Rom. 2:21; Matt. 23:3,4). Much of Jesus' ministry was teaching. Isaiah foretold the Messiah's ministry of teaching (Isa, 28:9-13). It is unquestionably significant that in the summary of Jesus' ministry teaching is mentioned first (Matt. 4: 23; 9: 35). It also is noteworthy that at the very beginning of the New Testament we have the teaching of Jesus presented in three chapters known as "The Sermon on the Mount" (Mat 5-7).

#### LESSON NOTES:

**Not as the Scribes:** Paul said of the scribes and Pharisees that because they did not understand the prophets they could not recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 13:27). Therefore they fulfilled the prophecies of His suffering and death by condemning Him. The teachers of Jesus' day taught the people to look for a political Messiah who would deliver Israel from the yoke of Roman oppression and restore the nation to political power. This teaching hindered many from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. .

Jesus also upbraided the Sadducees for their ignorance of the Scriptures. He showed the absurdity of their "no resurrection" doctrine by using the Scripture (Matt. 22:23-33). Here the teaching of Jesus astonished the multitude.

The scribes and Pharisees gave greater prominence to the traditions of the fathers than to the commandments of God. Jesus rebuked them for making the fifth commandment "of none effect" by their tradition. This tradition released the people from the obligation to "honor thy father and mother" if certain gifts were given by which the Pharisees profited. Their tradition made the law of God void (Matt. 15: 6). They also esteemed their tradition of the Sabbath more highly than the deliverance of people from sickness (Matt. 12 :10 -12). The ceremonial washings were more important to the scribes and Pharisees than the hidden sins of the heart. Jesus taught that evil thoughts defiled a man rather than eating without the ceremonial washing.

The example the Pharisees set belied their teaching. Over and over, Jesus called them hypocrites for their double standard (Matt. 23).

On the other hand Jesus, the great "Teacher," knew the Scriptures and insisted on their fulfillment (Matt. 23:29). His interpretation of the Old Testament was authoritative. He illuminated and enlarged the scope of the Old Testament and commandments for the gospel age. His life exemplified His teaching. No one was able to convict Him of sin. So Jesus could teach with authority and not as the scribes (Matt. 7:29).

**Precept Upon Precept:** The New Testament description of the ministry of Jesus begins with His teaching known as "The Sermon on the Mount." Jesus retired to a mountain with His disciples and there "he opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt. 5:2). The teaching in the three chapters which follow these words ought to be deeply and earnestly studied by every Christian, for it has been called aptly the "Constitution of the Kingdom."

The very first words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," reveal that the character of the kingdom of God is entirely different from the kingdoms of this world. First, we have the Beatitudes, a list of nine conditions and attitudes that are approved by God. The word "blessed" in these verses means "happy." The gospel is intended to bring us real and lasting happiness.

After commanding the disciples to shine as lights in the dark world by maintaining their separated characteristics, He emphasized the necessity of doing and teaching the commandments. Next, the Lord expounds precept after precept from the Old Testament and attacks the root of the problem rather than the fruit. Here He deals more with the wrong attitudes which precede wrong actions.

In chapter six, Jesus explains the value of secret generosity, secret prayer, and secret self denial. Those who display these religious exercises for the approval of men lose the reward of the Heavenly Father.

Throughout the teaching, Jesus refers to God as Father. This is an entirely new revelation of God and a very wonderful and encouraging one. Since the Father knows our needs, Jesus taught, we need not be concerned and worried about material things.

Materialism is the foremost competition for the heart of man:" . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

After numerous precepts in chapter seven, there is the passage known as "The Golden Rule" (vs.12) and the familiar description of the "strait and narrow way" (vs. 14). Jesus ends this teaching by illustrating the importance of obedience to "these sayings of mine" by contrasting the building of a house on a solid foundation and a house on sand (vss. 24-27).

**The Lessons:** We ought to be able to learn much about teaching from the Master Teacher. Like Him, we ought never to lose sight of the fact that the gospel is good news--glad tidings. It is a message of deliverance and liberty.

Our teaching ought to be definite and with authority. We ought to know what we teach. The Pharisees had a way of presenting various Views of well-known rabbis in their teaching, sometimes adding their own view. The result was often confusion and division. Jesus' teaching was clear, concise, and definite. It left no room for doubt.

Just as the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees was compromised by the example they set before their pupil s, so our teaching, no matter how sound and orthodox, will be of little value unless we exemplify that which we teach. The joy of seeing pupils learn well the things we teach is a great thrill. It is our duty as well to pass along the light which God has given us to others who also will some day teach others.

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- **Read until the passage says something to you**
- **Write it down.**
- **Pray it back until your soul gets hot with the truth.**
- **Share it with someone else as soon as-possible.**