

**Helping Our
Children Present
Jesus as the Son of
Man
Part I**

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 23**

By

Duane L. Anderson

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Last Updated: January 2013

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Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Zacharias was Burning Incense in the Temple

Today we are beginning a new series of topics on the lessons that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children from the book of Luke. The four Gospels each present a different focus as they introduce us to the life of Christ. Matthew presents Christ as the promised King. Mark presents Christ as the Servant. Luke presents Christ as the Son of man. John presents Christ as the Son of God. In this series of topics we will see that we want to help our children understand why it is so important that Christ is the Son of man.

In Luke 1:1-4 we read, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Here we see why Luke explains that the Lord led him to write the book of Luke.

Luke had become a part of the team traveling with Paul at the city of Troas. Acts 16:10 says, “Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Paul had just been given the vision by God. In that vision God had shown Paul a man of Macedonia pleading, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” This verse says that when Paul had seen the vision that immediately “we” sought to go to Macedonia. This is the first time that Luke uses “we” in the book of Acts because this is the place where he had joined the team with Paul. The “we” is used many times through of the rest of the book of Acts.

In Acts 21:8 we read, “On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.” Except for the twelve days that Paul was gone from Caesarea to Jerusalem, Paul spent the next two years after the trip to Jerusalem in prison in the city of Caesarea. At the end of those two years Acts 27:1 says, “And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.” Here we see that the “we” is used again showing that Luke traveled from Caesarea to Rome with Paul. This meant that Luke had the opportunity during those two years to interview many people that had seen Christ including several of the apostles. As a result, we see that Luke researched the many accounts that had been written about the life of Christ and also had the opportunity to interview many eyewitnesses who had seen and talked to Christ personally.

The Lord led Luke to do this careful research and interview these many eyewitnesses so that he could have a very clear understanding of the life of Christ even though Luke had not personally met Christ. Luke did this because the Lord had led him to write an orderly account of the life and ministry of Christ to Theophilus so that Theophilus could have a written copy and know for certain the things that he had been taught about Christ. The name “Theophilus” means friend of

God. Matthew, Mark and John were all Jews and so they had grown up learning the Old Testament and knew the Jewish background of Christ. In contrast, Luke and Theophilus are Gentile names. Some historians say that Luke grew up in the city of Antioch. As a result, the Lord led Luke to write this book to Theophilus to be a special help and to give understanding to all the people that have not become familiar with the Old Testament as they were growing up. This would probably apply to many of you that are reading this topic.

Luke called Theophilus “most excellent Theophilus” since this title was usually given to governors or other highly respected leaders, it is probable that Theophilus to whom this letter and the book of Acts were written was a government official in the Roman government or a highly respected leader. As a result, we will see several times in the book of Luke references to the Roman rulers that were in power at the time various events happened that are recorded in the book of Luke. This makes it possible give accurate dates to those events by comparing those Scriptures to the same events in Roman history.

John the Baptist was the one who the Lord sent to prepare the way for Christ. As a result, Luke began his orderly account about the life and ministry of Jesus by introducing the parents of John the Baptist. Luke 1:5-7 says, “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.” Here we see that John was born during the time that Herod the Great was the Roman governor in Judea. We also see that Herod was given the title King of Judea.

The father of John the Baptist was a Jewish priest by the name of Zacharias and he was of the division of Abijah. All of the descendents of Aaron, the brother of Moses, served as priests among the Jews. In the time of David about one thousand years earlier the priests had been divided into 24 divisions. I Chronicles 24:5, and 24:10 say, “Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God, from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar...the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah.” Here we see that Zacharias was in the eighth division of the priests. Each of the 24 divisions of priests would serve at the temple about two weeks out of the year. We will see that Zacharias and all of the priests of division eight were serving at the temple at the time that the Lord sent an angel to speak to Zacharias.

We learn several things about Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was also a descendent of Aaron. Both the husband and wife were righteous in the sight of God. We also see that they walked in all of the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. In fact they are described as blameless. However, there was one thing that caused them to have sorrow in their lives. One of the greatest desires of every Jewish family was to have a child because the Jews thought that if a couple did not have a child than God was not pleased with them. We see that Zacharias and Elizabeth had no child. The word “barren” means a woman who has not conceived a child. Now it seemed like it was too late for them to have a child because they were both getting older.

Luke 1:8-10 says, “So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.” Division eight of the priests were serving at the temple at the particular time that this event took place. As a result, Zacharias and the nearly one thousand priests of his division were at the temple carrying out the ministry of the priests.

Each morning and each evening one of the priests was chosen by lot to be the one to go into the temple to offer incense and put oil in the lamps. Since each division of priests had nearly a thousand priests, during their entire lifetime many of the priests never had the opportunity to offer incense because only one priest would be chosen by lot for each day. Since the priests were only at the temple for about two weeks out of the year, that meant that only a few priests in each division would get the opportunity to offer incense each year. Once they had offered incense they did not get that opportunity again. As a result, many of the priests never had that opportunity.

However, we see that God did cause the casting of lots to give Zacharias the opportunity to offer incense. We see that his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. Exodus 30:7-8 says, “Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.” This must have been one of the greatest opportunities that Zacharias had in his entire ministry as he had this opportunity to offer incense.

The times that the priest went into the temple to offer incense each morning and each evening were both times when the people gathered in the Temple Court for prayer. About 35 years later Acts 3:1 says, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.” These times were very important to the Jews who were in Jerusalem. We see that the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. This multitude included both the other priests and also all of the other Jews in Jerusalem who came to worship God.

As Christians, I Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” This is a reminder that we can pray at all times about all things. However, one of the things that we also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn is the importance of having times each day when they set aside time for personal prayer to the Lord and meditation on His Word. This is the way that they build their personal fellowship with the Lord. I John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Later in that chapter we see that we walk in fellowship with the Lord as we walk in the light. Christ gave us an example in Mark 1:35 where we read, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” In the same way we give our children an example as we spend time in prayer and meditation each day. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of prayer and meditation each day.

2.

Zacharias was Promised a Son

In our last topic we saw that we want to provide an example for our children by setting aside time each day for prayer. We saw that the Jews gathered in the courtyard of the temple each morning and each evening at the time of the offering of incense. We also saw in the first part of chapter one of Luke that Zacharias was chosen by lot to offer incense in the temple. Today we will learn about something very special that happened in the life of Zacharias while he was offering incense in the temple.

Luke 1:11-14 says, "Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." Here we see that an angel appeared to Zacharias while he was offering incense in the temple.

Since Luke was a doctor, we see that he was very precise as he wrote about this event. He mentioned that the angel that appeared to Zacharias was standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Zacharias had not expected that to happen and we see that this event immediately stirred up troubled thoughts in his mind. It also caused fear to take possession of him. This was the normal response when people saw an angel of God. In Luke 2:9 we read, "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid." We will see that Luke often mentions a response of fear when people saw an angel or saw God work in an unusual way. This kind of fear is normal and proper because it shows a reverence for God.

The angel immediately told Zacharias not to be afraid. In fact the angel said that he had been sent to him to let him know that his prayer had been heard. The answer to that prayer was that Elizabeth would have a son. Here we see a key when a wife is unable to conceive a child. The first thing that a couple should do is begin to pray to the Lord and ask the Lord to give them a child. We see the response of Hannah and her husband to her prayer for a child in I Samuel 1:27-28 where we read, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord. So they worshiped the Lord there." God answered many similar prayers in Scripture.

Zacharias was also told that they should name their son John. The word "John" means Jehovah is a gracious giver. God also told Zacharias that the birth of John would cause him and Elizabeth to experience joy and gladness in their lives. Luke often talks about the joy that the Lord gives. In addition, many others would rejoice in his birth. Isaiah had written in Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." We will see that Isaiah was writing about the ministry of John.

In Luke 1:15-17 the angel went on to tell Zacharias what John would do. Those verses say, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'" John would be great in the sight of the Lord. Here we see an important lesson for our own lives and for our children. It has eternal value for us to be great in the sight of the Lord rather than to try and become great in the sight of the people of this world.

The angel gave one instruction for John. He was not to drink wine or strong drink. The angel also gave a great personal promise about John. He said that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time that he was conceived in his mother's womb. The angel also described the ministry of John. We see that he would turn many of the people of Israel back to the Lord their God. Malachi 4:5-6 says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." Luke said that John would go before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah. Elijah will come before the second coming of Christ. John came before the first coming of Christ. However, both come in the same power.

We see that the angel promised Zacharias that John would do the same three things before the first coming of Christ that Elijah would do before the second coming of Christ. That meant that John would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. Second, John would turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Third, John would make ready a people prepared for the Lord. All three things are a reminder of the fact that Christ changes and transforms lives. The result would be that many people would follow Christ. John 1:36-37 says, "And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." These two, Andrew and John both later became a part of the Twelve that Christ chose to be apostles.

Luke 1:18-20 says, "And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.'" Here we see that Zacharias had doubts about the promise of the angel. In fact he gave a reason why he thought that it could not happen.

As a result, the angel said certain things so that Zacharias would know that his word was true. First, the angel gave his name. He said that he was the angel Gabriel. Gabriel is mentioned twice in the book of Daniel. Gabriel said that it was his privilege to stand in the presence of God. He said that God had sent him to bring this good news to Zacharias. Second, Gabriel gave Zacharias a sign that his words would come true. That sign was that he would be mute and would not be able to speak until after the birth of John. The angel said that his words would be fulfilled in their own time which began immediately.

Luke 1:21-25 goes on to say, “And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”” The people who came to the temple every day at the time of the offering of incense knew how long the priest was usually in the temple before he came out to bless the people. They were amazed because Zacharias stayed in the temple much longer than was normal.

When Zacharias came out of the temple, the people received a second surprise. Zacharias was not able to talk or give that blessing. Normally the priest would repeat the blessing given in Numbers 6:24-26 which says, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” That day Zacharias could not give the blessing. Instead he motioned to the people because he was not able to talk. Then the people realized that Zacharias must have seen a vision in the temple. As the people returned to their homes or to their work, a few probably wondered what he had seen in the vision.

Zacharias completed his days of service as one of the priests at the temple. Then he returned to his home in the hills of Judea. Sometime after he returned home his wife, Elizabeth, conceived a child as Gabriel had promised to Zacharias when he appeared to him in the temple. Then Zacharias and Elizabeth did not tell anyone that she had conceived a child for five months.

However, Elizabeth and Zacharias were filled with joy. Elizabeth said that the Lord had looked upon her and God had shown her His favor. To have no child was a reproach in the Jewish culture. The word “reproach” means shame. Here we see that Elizabeth had felt shame for many years because she had not had a child. Rachel had said the same thing more than 1800 hundred years earlier. Genesis 30:23 says, “And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach.”” We see a key with both women. They both recognized that it was God that had taken away their shame.

This is a key thing to help our physical and spiritual children understand. God is the One who is able to take away shame from our lives. Sometimes people have shame as the result of sin. However, many times people experience shame because of the attitudes of people toward them. This was true among the Jews. Most Jews felt that God was showing His disfavor when He did not give a couple a child. Here we see that such a conclusion was actually a human judgment. God had His purpose for waiting until Zacharias and Elizabeth were older before He gave them a child. We want to help our children understand that God has a perfect plan for their lives and they do not need to feel shame because of the opinions of people. Instead they can trust the Lord to accomplish His purpose through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to be free from shame that is the result of the opinions of people.

3.

Mary was Promised a Son

In the last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the Lord is the One who is able to take away the shame in their lives. Part of the time that shame is the result of sin in the life of a person. However, many times shame is the result of the opinions of other people. We saw that Zacharias and Elizabeth were filled with joy as a result of the fact that God sent the angel, Gabriel, to let them know that they would have a son and take away their shame. In this topic we are going to see that Gabriel appeared to Mary a few months later. He also brought her a message from God. God did not want her to feel shame even though God knew that there would be many people that would judge Mary and gossip about her.

Luke 1:26-29 says, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was." In our last topic we saw that Elizabeth kept it a secret for five months that she had conceived a child. Here we see that it was in the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.

Luke mentioned that Elizabeth lived in the hills of Galilee. Here we see that Mary lived in the town of Nazareth in the area of Galilee. We see that the first thing that Luke mentioned about Mary was the fact that she was a virgin. More than 600 years earlier Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Gabriel explained to Mary how this birth would happen in Luke 1:35 where we read, "And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Here we see that it was essential that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to a virgin in order to be the sinless Son of God.

We see that Mary was betrothed to a man by the name of Joseph. The word "betrothed" means to be promised to Joseph and was as binding as a marriage. As a result, the Lord also sent an angel to show Joseph in a dream how Jesus was conceived. Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." God knew that Joseph also had to know that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. The genealogy in Matthew shows that Joseph was a descendent of David and so had a legal right to be the King. Then the genealogy in Luke shows that Mary was also a descendent of David and so His birth showed that the birth of Jesus fulfilled the promise made to David.

The first thing that the angel said to Mary was, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with

you; blessed are you among women!" Mary was probably still in her late teens at the time the angel appeared to her. As a result, this was a hard promise for her to understand. The angel said she could be filled with joy. The form of the word translated "highly favored" is only used one other place in the New Testament. Ephesians 1:6 says, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Here the word is translated "he has made accepted" and speaks of all Christians. It means that we have been made "full of grace" by God. The angel told Mary that God had made her full of grace so that she could receive a special blessing. Mary was greatly troubled in her mind when she heard this and thought about various things as she tried to understand what the angel meant.

The angel quickly ended her confusion. Luke 1:30-33 says, "Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." The word translated "favor" is another form of the word translated "full of grace" in the previous paragraph and is usually translated "grace". Here we see that the angel told Mary not to fear because she had found grace with God. In fact God had a very special plan for her life.

The angel went on to tell Mary that she would conceive a Son and that she was to call His name Jesus. The name Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation". The angel also told Mary that Jesus would be the Son of God and that He would fulfill the promises that the Lord had given to David. Luke 1:15 says, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." In this verse we see that the angel told Zacharias that John would be great. However, this promise to Mary is much greater. Jesus would be great because He would be the Son of the Highest. The word translated "Highest" is the word that was used to translate "The Most High God" in the Greek translation of the Old Testament so this was a promise that Jesus is the Son of God.

In addition to being the Son of God, the angel also told Mary that the Father would give Jesus the throne of David and that He would rule forever. In II Samuel 7 David wanted to build a house for the Lord. Instead God promised David that his son would build that house. However, God also gave David a great personal promise. II Samuel 7:13 says, "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Solomon built a temple. This promise is talking about a different house. This is talking about the household of faith. Galatians 6:10 says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Here we see that the household of faith includes all those who repent of their sin of unbelief and come to God by faith in Jesus and the payment that He made for our sins on the cross. God had promised David that his throne would be established forever. In these verses we see that Jesus would be the descendent of David that will rule forever because His kingdom will never come to an end because it is an eternal kingdom.

Mary had one other question that she needed the angel to answer. Luke 1:34-38 says, "Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered

and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." Mary wanted to know how this could happen since she had never had sexual relations with a man.

The angel answered Mary by telling her that this child would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Most High God would exert His power on Mary and cause her to conceive that baby in her womb. As a result, her Son would be called the Son of God. To help Mary understand that this was possible the angel also gave her an announcement about her relative Elizabeth. The angel told her that God had given Elizabeth the power to conceive in her old age and that she was now six months pregnant. The angel said that with God nothing will be impossible.

Mary suddenly faced a choice. The angel had told Mary that this child would be conceived by the Holy Spirit but the people of Nazareth had not been told. Once they found out that she was pregnant Mary knew that she could be accused of adultery since she was betrothed to Joseph and he would know that he was not the father of the baby that Mary was carrying. Deuteronomy 22:20-21 says, "But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you." Mary knew that she could be stoned to death. Mary could have chosen to say that she was not willing to face that possibility.

Instead Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." Here we see that Mary was willing to walk by faith and trust the Lord to work out all of the details. She was willing to accept the gossip of the people of Nazareth and trust the Lord to fulfill His Word. Matthew 1:18-19 says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." Here we see that Joseph did not want to make her a public example and have her stoned to death. The Lord allowed Joseph time to make this decision and then sent the angel to tell how Jesus had been conceived.

We see that Joseph also chose to accept the gossip of the people of Nazareth. Matthew 1:24-25 says, "Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus." God gave both Joseph and Mary the strength for the future. We also want to help our children understand that God will give them strength for every situation that they face in life. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to trust the Lord in every situation.

4.

Mary made a Visit to Elizabeth

In our last topic we saw that Mary was told that she would give birth to the Son of God. We saw that Mary was willing to live with the gossip that would come since the people of Nazareth did not know that Mary had conceived that Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. We saw that we also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the Lord will give them strength for every situation that they face in life including those who might make false accusations against them. In our topic today we will learn about the visit of Mary to Elizabeth after the visit of the angel Gabriel.

Luke 1:39-45 says, “Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”” Here we see that Mary quickly made arrangements to go and visit Elizabeth.

To travel from Galilee to the hill country of Judea was a trip of between 75 and 100 miles from Nazareth depending on which city in the hill country was the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. A very unusual thing happened when Mary greeted Elizabeth as she came into the house of Elizabeth. The baby immediately leaped in the womb of Elizabeth. Zacharias had been told in Luke 1:15 that the baby would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time that he was conceived in the womb of his mother. We see that Elizabeth was also filled with the Holy Spirit. This caused her to speak with a loud voice as she gave praise to God for what God was doing in the life of Mary.

Elizabeth gave praise to God for both Mary and the child that would be born to her. She asked why she would have the privilege of having a visit by the mother of the one who would be the promised Messiah. The angel had told Zacharias in Luke 1:17 about the ministry of John, “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” As a result, Zacharias and Elizabeth knew that John would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. The last part of verse 41 says, “And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit guided Elizabeth to recognize that the baby that Mary would have would be the Messiah that God had promised.

This is an example of the fact that the Holy Spirit gives us understanding when we seek to understand what the Lord is doing. John 14:26 says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Christ gave this promise to the disciples the night before He was

crucified. Since Elizabeth and John were both filled with the Holy Spirit already, the Spirit gave them that understanding at that time. Elizabeth then told Mary that the Holy Spirit had caused the baby to leap in her womb as soon as she heard the greeting of Mary. Elizabeth said that because Mary had believed the promise of God that she would see a fulfillment of all that God had promised.

Mary immediately gave praise to God for what the Lord had chosen to do in her life. Luke 1:46-50 says, "And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.'" The word "magnifies" means to give praise or to declare the greatness of. Here we see that Mary began by giving praise to the Lord and declaring His greatness. Even as a young woman she recognized the greatness of God.

Our human spirit is where we have communion with the Holy Spirit. The spirit of Mary was filled with joy. Mary recognized that the baby that the Lord had conceived in her body was also her Savior. A few months later an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:21, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Mary and Joseph both understood even before Jesus was born that He was also their Savior and He would save them from their sins. Just like us they both needed a Savior to save them from their sin.

Mary also realized her own humanity when she said, "For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant." The word translated "lowly state" is an attitude of humility that causes us to realize our littleness and guilt. Philippians 3:21 says, "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Here we see that Christ will conform our lowly body to His glorious body. The word translated "maidservant" was the word for a female bondservant. Mary knew that she was just a bondservant of the Lord as she carried out the plan that He had for her life. She realized that future generations would consider her blessed because God had chosen to work through her life.

Mary went on to give praise and glory to God for who He is. She gave praise for the fact that God is the One who is Mighty. She realized that the Lord had chosen to do wonderful things in her life by giving her the opportunity to give birth to the One who would be her Savior. She realized that God is the only One who is holy because that is His character. Mary also recognized that she needed the mercy of God just like every person from all generations that have had a godly fear in their lives. The word translated "mercy" means the kindness of God by which He forgives all of our sins through Christ and does not give us the eternal judgment that we deserve.

Mary continued to describe the character and works of God as she gave praise to God. Luke 1:51-56 says, "He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has

helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.” Mary gives a real example of true worship as she described the character and work of God.

The word translated “strength” speaks of the mighty power of God. The word is used several times as a part of a prayer to describe the power of God. Paul used this word in Ephesians 1:19-20 where we read, “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” Mary certainly recognized the mighty power of God as she spoke of the way that God works through His power.

She recognized that God has used His power to scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Daniel 4:30-31, 33 says, “The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!...That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.” This is certainly an example of what Mary said about scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

It is also an example of the way that God puts down the mighty from their thrones. As Mary talked about the way that God judges the mighty in their pride, she also spoke of the fact that God exalts the lowly. The word translated “lowly” means humble or lowly in spirit. James 4:6-7 says, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Mary also spoke of the fact that God fills to the fullest with good things those who are hungry. The word translated “good things” speaks of that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. At the same time He sends the rich away empty handed because they lack spiritual life.

Mary also spoke of the fact that God had remembered the nation of Israel. In the Old Testament God had warned Israel many times that judgment would come if they turned away from Him. At the same time He promised that He would continue to show His mercy to Abraham and his descendents forever. God had promised Israel in Deuteronomy 30:3, “That the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.” Mary realized that God was going to bring that future blessing to the nation of Israel through the Son that would be born to her.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand that Mary realized that her own son would also be her Savior. This will make it possible for them to help others by explaining this clearly. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Mary understood that her son was also her Savior.

5.

Zacharias and Elizabeth Named John

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children clearly understand that Mary gave praise to God for the fact that He had chosen to work in her life so that she gave birth to Jesus. We saw that Mary recognized that her own son would also be her Savior. We saw that she expressed these thoughts in the home of Elizabeth and Zacharias after the angel had appeared to her and told her what would happen in her life. Today we are going to see that the son that had been promised to Zacharias and Elizabeth was born.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months after Mary learned that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and conceive Jesus in her womb. That was also the last three months of the pregnancy of Elizabeth as she and her husband waited for the coming of their son that would go before Jesus to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus. Today we will learn about the birth of that son to Elizabeth. Luke 1:57-58 says, "Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her." We saw in an earlier topic that God had promised a son to Zacharias and Elizabeth even though they were old.

Here we see that Elizabeth's full time had come and it was time for that promised son to be born. We also see how the neighbors and relatives responded to that birth. We see that the neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to Elizabeth. As we mentioned in an earlier topic, among the Jews it was considered a reproach or a cause of shame if a couple did not have a child. We see that pain and sorrow in the words of Hannah as she prayed at the tabernacle. I Samuel 1:10-11 says, "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." With this birth Elizabeth no longer felt that shame.

The neighbors and relatives heard that God had shown great mercy to Elizabeth. The word translated "had shown great" means to enlarge or magnify. Mary had used this same word in Luke 1:46-47 where we read, "And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Here we see that the neighbors and relatives also saw that what had happened was the work of God and they gave glory to Him. In addition, they all came and rejoiced with Elizabeth at the child that the Lord had given to her and Zacharias.

The Jews normally named a boy on the eighth day at the same time that they circumcised him. Luke 1:59-63 says, "So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled."

It was a great day when a boy was circumcised and given a name. As a result, the neighbors and relatives all came for the event.

We see why the Jews circumcised on the eighth day in Genesis 17:12 where we read, "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant." Here we see that God told Abraham that a child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. We saw in an earlier topic that Zacharias had been told that he would not be able to speak because he did not believe. Luke 1:20 says, "But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time." As a result, Zacharias could not take the leadership in the circumcising of his son. Instead other priests had been called to come and circumcise the child.

The neighbors and relatives immediately began to call the baby Zacharias after the name of his father since he was the first son. Elizabeth told them that they were calling him the wrong name. She told him that his name was to be John. In Luke 1:13 the angel told Zacharias, "But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." We saw in the topic on that verse that the word "John" means Jehovah is a gracious giver. However, none of the neighbors or relatives knew what the angel had told Zacharias. As a result, they told Elizabeth that there was no one among all of the relatives by the name of John. Here we see that it was common for the Jews to name the first son after the father and the later children after some relative.

The neighbors and relatives were not ready to let Elizabeth make the decision to name the child John. As a result they made signs to Zacharias to see what he wanted to name the child. Here we see that Zacharias could not hear as well as not being able to talk. He made motions to them that he wanted a writing tablet. He wrote on the tablet, "His name is John". The word translated "marveled" means to be filled with wonder or amazement. Luke 2:18 says, "And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds." Here we see that the people of Bethlehem all marveled when the shepherds told them about the birth of Christ. That was the same response made by the neighbors and relatives when Zacharias wrote John instead of writing his own name.

Suddenly the neighbors and relatives got another big surprise. Luke 1:64-66 says, "Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him." The angel had told Zacharias that he would be mute until the child was born. Now that the child had been named that time of silence had come to an end.

Immediately Zacharias opened his mouth and began talking. In fact he began giving praise to God for what the Lord had done by giving them a child. Psalm 127:3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." Zacharias recognized that this was a special child that had been promised by the Lord because the Lord had a very special ministry for him. We also want to help every parent understand that children are given by the

Lord and He has a purpose for their lives. Zacharias was filled with joy as he gave praise to the Lord.

People that were there that day for the circumcision and naming of John quickly began telling others about the unusual things that had happened to Zacharias. They told about the praise that he had given to the Lord as he talked about John and at least some of the things that the angel had told him. Perhaps he even shared the words recorded in Luke 1:15-17 which say, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." As a result, this brought great fear on all of the people throughout the hill country of Judea as they discussed the things that had been passed on to them.

Whatever Zacharias said that day, it was a reminder to all of the people in the hill country that God had not forgotten the people of Israel. It had been almost 400 years since the last book of the Old Testament had been written. In addition, the people were also living under the control of the Roman government. They felt that God had been silent and now they heard that God had spoken to Zacharias in the temple. This caused the people to experience a sense of wonder and the people throughout the area began talking about what the Lord had done.

We see that all those who heard these things kept them in their hearts. The word translated "kept" means to place, to make, or to lay down a foundation. This same word is used in John 10:11 where Christ said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." Here the word is translated "gave". Christ came to lay down His life for the sheep. The people in the hill country laid these thoughts in their hearts so that they became a foundation for all that they thought and said. Here we see how the Lord was working in the hearts of people to prepare them for the message that John would share about the coming of Christ.

The people in the hill country wondered what kind of a person John would be with such an unusual background that began even before his birth. As John grew up, we also read that the hand of the Lord was with him. Here we see an important lesson that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children. The hand of God is used to describe his power and authority. The Lord had a purpose for the life of John and was preparing him to carry out that purpose. In the same way God also has a purpose for the life of every Christian. That plan is what gives our lives meaning and purpose. The Lord wants us to help each of our children find out the purpose that they Lord has for their lives as we give them guidance day by day. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children discover the purpose that God has for their lives.

6.

Zacharias Spoke of the Promises of God

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the things that happened when John was circumcised and named. We saw that the neighbors and relatives wanted to name the son after the father. However, both Elizabeth and later Zacharias said that the name of the child was to be John. The way that the events happened at the naming of John caused the people of the hill country to keep those thoughts in their hearts as they wondered what God was going to do through John. Today we are going to see what Zacharias said that day as he spoke about the promises of God.

Luke 1:67-71 says, "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us." Here we see that on the day that John was named that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave praise to the Lord for His promises.

Luke gives us some very important lessons about the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Each time Luke mentioned that a person was filled with the Holy Spirit in the book of Luke that person gave praise and worship to God. The book of Acts was also written by Luke. We see that in addition to worship that those who are filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts also speak the Word of God with boldness to those who are not Christians. Acts 4:31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." As a result, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will worship God, we will serve one another as Christians in love and we will share the Gospel with those who are not Christians. Put another way, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will love God with our whole heart, we will love one another as Christ loved us and we will love our neighbor as we love ourselves which will lead us to speak the Word of God boldly.

In his worship of God, Zacharias said that the Lord God of Israel is blessed. He also said that God had visited and redeemed His people. Then Zacharias spoke about the way that the Lord would visit and redeem His people. Psalm 18:1-2 says, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Here we see that Zacharias was not talking about John but the One for whom John would prepare the way. Zacharias also said that One would come from the house of David. Zacharias and his son John were Levites but Jesus was from the family of David.

Zacharias said that the fact that God would redeem His people had been promised by the mouth of His holy prophets. The prophets promised that Christ would save His people from all enemies from the time the world began. The first promise about Christ who would come from

the seed of woman was given when God told about the future judgment that would come on Satan in Genesis 3:15. That verse says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” In this verse we see that the Seed of woman, a particular person, would crush the head of Satan. This early promise about Christ pointed to the fact that He would save us from all of our enemies. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. I Corinthians 15:54-57 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We can rejoice because we no longer need to fear any enemies including Satan or death.

Luke 1:72-75 says, “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” We see that Christ would also fulfill the promises that God had made to Abraham and his descendents. By His death for sin, Christ made it possible for God to show mercy to Abraham and all of his descendents that placed their faith in the promises of God.

God had promised that He would show that mercy when He first gave that covenant to Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3 says, “Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” This covenant with Abraham promised personal blessing to Abraham. It promised blessing to the nation that would come from Abraham. It also promised a land to that nation. In addition, Abraham was promised that all families of the earth would be blessed from the One that would come through Abraham which is actually a promise about the fact that Christ would come.

God also gave a promise to the nation that would come from Abraham that they would be able to serve Him without fear because God would deliver them when they were serving Him. Zacharias realized that promise was a great promise. Israel could know that as long as they walked in holiness and righteousness that they could serve God without fear because of the deliverance that the Lord would provide them. Moses had reminded Israel of that promise when he said in Deuteronomy 28:1, “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.” If the people would obey the Lord and keep His commandments God promised that they would not have fear because they would experience the blessing of the Lord.

After speaking about Christ, Zacharias went on to speak about his son that would go before Christ. Luke 1:76-80 says, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the

Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." Zacharias said that John would be the prophet of the Highest.

The word translated "Highest" is the word that was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew word for "The Most High God". This word is used three times in this chapter. In verses 32 Mary was promised that Her Son would be the Son of the Highest. Then in verse 35 Mary was told, "And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Now in this verse Zacharias said that his son would be the prophet of the Highest. Here we see that the name is used for Christ.

Zacharias said that John would prepare the way for Christ. Later John was asked who he was by priests and Levites that had been sent from the religious leaders in Jerusalem. John answered their questions by saying in John 1:23, "He said: "I am "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord," 'as the prophet Isaiah said.'"" In addition to preparing the way for Christ, Zacharias said that John would give knowledge of salvation to the people of the nation of Israel. This message of salvation would tell them how to have remission of sins. The word translated "remission" means forgiveness or pardon of sins. Hebrews 9:22 uses this word when it says, "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." That is why John introduced Christ to his disciples by saying in John 1:29, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Our forgiveness and pardon was made possible through the blood of Christ.

Zacharias said that it was through the mercy of the Father that the Dayspring from on high would visit them. The word translated "Dayspring" meant the east or the place of the sun rise. In Malachi 4:2 we read, "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves." Here we see that Malachi prophesied that the Messiah would be the Sun of Righteousness. Zacharias also referred to Isaiah 9:2 which is another prophecy about the Messiah that says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined." In this way Zacharias said that Christ would fulfill the Old Testament prophecies.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the way that John grew. We read that he became strong in spirit. A person becomes strong in spirit as he or she learns to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. We want to provide an example for our children to follow by our own example. In addition, we want to help them learn how to help others become strong in spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit.

7.

Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what Zacharias said about the ministry of Christ. We also saw that we want to help our children learn what Zacharias said about his own son. In this topic we are going to see some of the key things that we want to help our children understand about the birth of Jesus.

In Luke 2:1-7 we read, “And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” God had promised in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. This shows how God worked through the Roman government to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ.

Here we see that the Roman emperor had one purpose but God had another. The Roman emperor ordered all of the people in the Roman Empire to be registered. This was done to register young men for military service. Later it was also used to make certain that the people paid their taxes to the Roman government. Here we see that Caesar had one purpose and God had another. Micah 5:2 says, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” The purpose of God was to get Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem to fulfill the promise that He had given through Micah about the place where the Messiah would be born. This reminds us that God can use even the most corrupt government to fulfill His purpose.

This registration required that everyone return to the city of their ancestors to be registered to make certain that every man was registered for military service. Later this registration also made it possible for the Romans to collect taxes. The Lord had shown Joseph in a dream that the Holy Spirit was the One who had come upon Mary and that was why she was pregnant. Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.” Here we see that Joseph took Mary as his wife but they waited until after the birth of Jesus to have sexual relationships. Joseph and Mary were both descendents of David. As a result, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register. Mary and Joseph lived in the town of Nazareth so that meant that they had to travel about 70 miles which included traveling through the mountains in order to reach Bethlehem.

The time for the birth of Jesus was close and so this was probably a difficult trip for them and

especially for Mary. They arrived in Bethlehem so that Joseph could register. Bethlehem was a small town and the inn was full. The rooms were probably filled by the Romans who were taking the census. On one of the days that Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem Mary went into labor. They had no relatives in the area so Mary and Joseph had taken shelter in a place where animals were fed, possibly a cave or a stable. As a result, when Jesus was born he was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger where the animals were fed. Swaddling cloths were strips of cloth that were used to tightly wrap a baby when it was first born.

Luke 2:8-14 says, "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" Here we see that God chose to announce the birth of Jesus to the world in a very unique way.

Bethlehem was less than five miles from Jerusalem. Throughout the year many sheep and lambs were offered as sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. The hills around Bethlehem grew much grass and so many of the sheep that were offered in the temple throughout the year were fed on those hills and the shepherds would be with their sheep out in the fields both day and night. The evening Christ was born an angel suddenly stood in front of a group of shepherds on the hillside. The glory of the Lord surrounded this angel and as a result the shepherds were filled with fear. The angel immediately told the shepherds not to be afraid because he brought good news. This good news was a message for all people that would bring great joy to the lives of the people.

Many of the Jews were looking for the Messiah (Christ the Lord) that would come from the family of David to fulfill the promises given in the Old Testament. The angel told the shepherds that the Christ had just been born that very day in the city of Bethlehem. The angel also gave a sign to the shepherds so they would know how to recognize this baby. The angel said that they would find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. Since the angel said the baby would be lying in a manger the shepherds immediately knew that they would find the baby in a place where the cattle were fed.

Suddenly the angel that delivered this message to the shepherds was joined by a large group of angels. These angels were expressing their praise to God. The Old Testament prophets had written about the coming of salvation through Christ and the angels had wanted to know how God was going to provide that salvation. I Peter 1:12 says, "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into." Now the angels had their answer and they were filled with praise to God. The shepherds must have listened with amazement as the expressed their praise to God for revealing how he would provide this salvation. The angels spoke together saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" The angels had

desired to know how God would provide salvation from the time Adam sinned and now they had their answer.

After expressing their praise to God, the angels disappeared. Luke 2:15-20 says, "So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them." At that moment the shepherds had a much greater interest than protecting their sheep.

All they could think about was this heavenly message. They immediately decided to go to Bethlehem and find the baby that would be the Christ. The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem as quickly as they could walk that night. As shepherds they knew where there were mangers in Bethlehem to feed the animals. As a result, they quickly found Mary and Joseph. Even more exciting was the fact that they found the Baby lying in the manger just as the angel had said.

Those shepherds were never the same again. Everywhere they went they told others what the angel had told them concerning this Child. When we truly meet Jesus we cannot keep silent. Peter and John said in Acts 4:18-20, "And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'" The shepherds had the same response as Peter and John when they met Jesus. People were filled with amazement as they heard the message of the shepherds. We see this same wonder and amazement by others at least 15 times in the book of Luke. We see that the shepherds returned to their sheep with glory and praise in their hearts to God for the things that they had seen and the things that God had taught them through the angels.

Meanwhile we see that Mary continued to think about all these things that had happened and pondered them in her heart. The word translated "pondered" means to confer together or to bring thoughts together in one's mind or heart. Mary realized that she was now raising the Son of God. Mary had seen the Lord work in many different ways in her life. First, the angel had appeared to her and told her about the plan that God had for her life. Then that message had been confirmed through the words that Elizabeth had spoken to her. The Lord had also revealed to Joseph through a dream how the Lord was working. Now everything had been confirmed again by the shepherds. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to compare the things that the Lord has done so that the Lord can help them grow in their understanding of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God introduced Jesus to the world.

8.

Jesus was Taken to the Temple

In our last topic we saw how the Lord worked to introduce the Christ to the world. He did not cause Jesus to enter the world in the palace of a king. Instead God chose to give Christ a humble birth where the only place to lay Him was in the manger where the animals were fed. Then God chose to introduce Christ to the world through some humble shepherds. In this topic we are going to see that other humble godly people were also given the privilege to tell others about the coming of the Christ to this world.

Luke 2:21-24 says, “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”” Here we see that the Child was circumcised and named when He was eight days old. All Jewish males were circumcised on the eighth day just as God had instructed Abraham. Genesis 17:12 says, “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.” It was at this time that He was also given the name of Jesus as the angel had instructed.

A male child that was born to a Jewish woman was to be presented to the Lord when the days of the purification of the mother were completed. Leviticus 12:3-4 says, “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled.” Here we see that the days of purification for a male child were a total of 40 days. After the time of purification the couple was to offer a lamb and a pigeon or turtledove as a sin offering. However, Leviticus 12:8 says, “And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons--one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’ ” Here we see that a very poor couple could bring either two turtledoves or two pigeons instead of bringing a lamb. This made it possible for even the poorest person to offer a sacrifice.

As a result, when Jesus was 40 days old Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. Exodus 13:2 says, “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.” Since Jesus was the firstborn son of Mary, his parents brought Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord. We see that Mary and Joseph were very poor because they brought two birds instead of a lamb as a sacrifice.

Some unexpected things happened while Mary and Joseph were at the temple. Luke 2:25-32

says, “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”” Here we see that one of the people that Mary, Joseph and Jesus met at the temple was Simeon.

Simeon was a very godly man. The word translated “just” is usually translated righteous and means one who is approved by God. The word translated “devout” means one that has a great reverence for God. The word translated “Consolation” means to encourage or comfort and the word was used by the Jews to speak about the promised Messiah. Here we see that Simeon was eagerly looking forward to the coming of the Messiah (Christ). We also see that the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon. Throughout the Old Testament we see that the Holy Spirit came upon people when God gave them a special responsibility.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the One that would be the Lord's Christ. Here we see that the Holy Spirit caused Simeon to know that he would see the Messiah before his death. To fulfill this promise to Simeon, the Holy Spirit led Simeon to go to the temple just before Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to present Him to the Lord. When Mary and Joseph came into the temple the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that this was the baby that would be the Messiah. Simeon went to Mary and Joseph and asked to hold their baby. Then Simeon held Jesus and blessed God for what God was going to do through that Child.

We are told the words that Simeon spoke as he held Jesus that day. Simeon thanked God that he could now die in peace. He thanked God for the fact that God had fulfilled His Word. He thanked the Lord for the privilege that He had to see the One that God had sent to provide God's salvation. This meant that He recognized the fact that Jesus would pay the penalty to redeem all mankind from sin. Simeon shows from His statement that He clearly understood that Jesus would pay the penalty for sin for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The word translated “revelation” means to reveal something that was previously unknown. The Gentiles had not known that One would come to pay the penalty for their sin. The Jews who looked for salvation would also rejoice because of the fact that Jesus was the One who would reveal the glory of God.

Luke 2:33-35 says, “And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”” Joseph and Mary were filled with amazement and wonder because of the words that Simeon spoke about Jesus. They realized that God had revealed too many others what God was going to do through Jesus.

Simeon also gave a blessing to Mary and Joseph. Simeon told Mary that her Child had been appointed by God for the fall and rising of many in Israel. Simeon here spoke of the fact that those who rejected Christ would be judged. Matthew 21:44 says, "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." Isaiah had warned several hundred years earlier in Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Those who rejected Jesus would experience judgment. In contrast, those who turned to Jesus would experience life. I Corinthians 1:22-24 says, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Simeon told Mary that a sword would pierce her soul also. Jesus understood the great grief that His mother experienced as He hung on the cross. As a result, He told John in John 19:26-27, "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." In these verses we also see that Simeon pointed out the rejection and crucifixion of Christ when he said that Christ would be spoken against and the soul of Mary would be pierced. We see that God revealed through Simeon what would later happen.

We see that God also brought another person to see Jesus at the very moment that Simeon was giving this blessing to Jesus. Luke 2:36-38 says, "Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." We see that Anna was a prophetess from the tribe of Asher. She had been married for seven years and then her husband had died. After her husband had died she had spent the rest of her life serving the Lord in the temple. We see that she was now 84 years old. Her most important ministry was fasting and prayer as she served the Lord.

She came just in time to hear the words that Simeon spoke about Jesus as he blessed Him. As a result, for the rest of her life we see that Anna had a new ministry added to her ministry of fasting and prayer. At that moment she gave thanks to God for providing the One who would pay the penalty for sin so that mankind could be bought back from the penalty of sin. However, a part of her ministry for the rest of her life now included telling other about Jesus. She gave this message to all the Jews that looked forward to the One that God would send to redeem Israel that Jesus had come to pay the penalty for sin.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children also learn how to share that same message with others. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:20, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." This will give our children a purpose in life as they tell others how they can have their sin forgiven and receive eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to tell others about the salvation Christ provided.

9.

Jesus Grew Up in Nazareth

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how they can explain to people how they can receive forgiveness of sin. We saw that Simeon and Anna both spoke about Jesus and the fact that He came to redeem mankind from sin. This is the same message that we want to help our children learn to share with others. In our topic today we are going to learn about the growth and development of Jesus in all areas of His early life.

Luke 2:39-40 says, "So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." Mary and Joseph fulfilled all that the law told them to do as they presented Jesus at the temple. We see that later they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in the area of Galilee. The book of Matthew tells us that they first went to Egypt for a period of time to protect Jesus from Herod because Herod tried to kill Jesus as a young boy.

We also see the way that Jesus grew as He developed. We read that He became strong in spirit. The word translated "strong" means to increase in strength or to grow strong. This word is used four times in the New Testament. It is used in Luke 1:80 to speak of the growth of John. Another place it is used is in one of the prayers of Paul for the Ephesians. Ephesians 3:14-16 says, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." In this verse we see that the first request that Paul made for the Ephesians was that they would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. The human spirit is our inner man and it is the Holy Spirit that gives strength to our human spirit. Since Jesus is both fully God and fully man He also was strengthened in His spirit as He grew. We also see that the grace of God was upon Jesus as He developed. Jesus experienced the loving kindness of His heavenly Father.

We go on to read about an event that happened when Jesus was 12 years old. Luke 2:41-45 says, "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him." One of the things that Mary and Joseph along with many of the other Jews did every year was go to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem every year.

In Deuteronomy 16:16 God had told the people of Israel, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not

appear before the Lord empty-handed.” The Passover was the feast to remember how the death angel had passed over the homes of the people of Israel because they had obeyed God and placed blood on the top and sides of their door when the death angel destroyed the oldest child in every family of the Egyptians. Passover was a one day feast that was followed by the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since many of the people of Galilee went to Jerusalem for these two feasts, large groups of people often traveled together as that traveled to and from the feasts.

The year Jesus was twelve Joseph took the family and traveled with many others from Galilee to this feast just as they normally did each year. However, something different happened this year that had not happened before. After the feast was over, the group with whom Joseph and the family traveled began their trip back to Galilee. However, Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. Since there were probably several hundred people traveling together Joseph was probably talking with some of the men and Mary with some of the women as they walked. The children were probably playing games together along the road as they walked. As a result, Mary and Joseph did not know that Jesus was not traveling with the group of people from Nazareth.

They traveled all day and then when the entire group camped for the evening Mary and Joseph started asked their friends and relatives if Jesus was with their children. Finally they realized that no one had seen Jesus all day. Suddenly they realized that Jesus must still be in Jerusalem. Since they had traveled an entire day that meant that it took Mary and Joseph most of the second day to get back to the city of Jerusalem. Until evening they probably looked at various places that they had been while they were in Jerusalem.

Luke 2:46- 50 says, “Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.” They were probably up early the next morning and started looking for Jesus. Apparently they spent much of the day looking in various places in and around the city before they went to the temple.

Finally they went to the temple. There they found Him in the temple courtyard sitting in the middle of the teachers. He was listening to them and was also asking them questions. Here we see that Jesus showed the attitude of a learner. He listened to the things that these teachers were teaching. He also asked them questions about the things that they taught. However, these teachers were astonished at the understanding of Jesus and the answers that He gave. About 20 years later John 7:15 says, “And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" Even 20 years later the Jews were amazed at the understanding and wisdom of Christ because He had never studied in Jerusalem under the well known teachers. Here we see that the well known teachers realized that Jesus spoke with great wisdom 20 years earlier.

Mary and Joseph were also amazed at the fact that Jesus was sitting among the teachers and asking them questions. They had probably searched every part of the city where a 12 year old boy might go to explore and had not even considered that he might be in the temple until they had searched every other place. Mary and Joseph were probably very happy to see Jesus but Mary was also upset. She said, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." The word translated "anxiously" means with great pain, sorrow or torment. The word is used four times in the New Testament. The word is used twice in Luke 16:24 and 25 to talk about the torment of hell. Then it is used in Acts 20:37-38 where the word is translated sorrowing, "Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship." Here we see that Mary was in great pain and fear because it had taken so long to find Jesus.

Jesus asked Mary and Joseph two questions, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Here we have the first recorded words of Jesus. His very first recorded words show that Christ was focused on doing the will of His Heavenly Father. Twenty years later Christ would say in John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Christ knew His purpose for coming to this earth and was surprised that His mother did not understand that purpose. In fact we read that neither Mary nor Joseph understood the meaning of the words that Jesus spoke to them that day.

Luke 2:51-52 says, "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Here we see a key lesson. Jesus was and is the Son of God. In fact Christ said in Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." This verse says that Jesus has all authority. Yet Jesus chose to place Himself in subjection to His earthly parents. The word translated "subject" means a voluntary choice to place your full potential under another. As the Son of God, Jesus made the voluntary choice to place Himself under His earthly parents.

We also see the way that Christ continued to grow in all areas of His life. Here we see a statement that speaks about the fact that Jesus became fully Man as well as fully God. He continued to increase in wisdom. The word translated "wisdom" is defined in James 3:17-18 where we read, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." He continued to grow in physical size. He experienced normal physical growth just like the other children. He continued to grow in favor with God. Here we are reminded that He was continually conscious of His relationship to the Father. He continued to grow in favor with people. Here we see that Christ knew how to develop good relationships with others. The pattern that we have in these verses for the growth of Jesus gives us a pattern as we help our physical and spiritual children in their development. We want to see them grow and mature in all areas of their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to grow to physical and spiritual maturity.

10.

John was Sent to Prepare the Way for Jesus

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children grow in the same ways that Jesus grew in His life. We saw that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. When the time drew close for Jesus to begin His public ministry, John the son of Zacharias began to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. The message of John was a message of repentance as he told people to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah.

Luke 3:1-3 says, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Tiberius Caesar was the ruler of the entire Roman Empire. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor in the region of Judea. Herod Antipas was the governor of Galilee and Perea and the one who would later put John to death. His brother Herod Philip II was the governor of the area north of Galilee. Lysanias was governor of the area north of Damascus.

We also see that Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. The Roman government did not like Annas as the high priest. As a result, they removed him and appointed his son-in-law, Caiaphas, as the high priest. Even though Caiaphas was officially the high priest as far as the Romans were concerned, the Jews still recognized Annas as the high priest. This is illustrated in the book of John. John 18:13-14 says, “And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.” Then John 18:19 says, “The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.” This verse and verse 22 show us that the Jews recognized Annas as the high priest. Finally John 18:24 says, “Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” The Jews knew that only Caiaphas could turn Jesus over to the Romans because the Romans did not recognize Annas as the high priest.

It was when these various leaders were ruling the places that are mentioned and Annas and Caiaphas were both considered the high priest that John began his ministry to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. We see that the main part of the ministry of John was in the area along the Jordan River. John was preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The word translated “baptism” means to submerge. It is the form of the word most commonly used to refer to the baptism of John. John 3:23 says, “Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.” Here we see that John baptized by submerging people in water. The word translated “repentance” means a change of mind or purpose. The word translated “remission” means release from bondage or imprisonment and is used to speak of the forgiveness or pardon of sin.

Luke then quoted from Isaiah 40 to describe the ministry of John. Luke 3:4-6 says, “As it is

written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." In the time of Isaiah when a king was going to travel to another area the king would send workers ahead to prepare the road. They would smooth out the bumps and fill in the holes. This made it possible for a king to ride on a smooth road. Isaiah used that activity of preparing the road for the coming of a king as an illustration of the fact that John would go ahead of Jesus to tell people to prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus.

We see one very important part of this message. This message included the thought that "All flesh would see the salvation of God." This is a key because God revealed to the world that Jesus would come to the world to pay the penalty to make salvation available for all people including both Jews and Gentiles. The concern of God has always been for all nations. Psalm 67:5-7 says, "Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Luke was the writer who wrote about the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles and so he included this part of the statement from Isaiah.

Luke 3:7-10 says, "Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?'" Crowds of people from both Judea and Galilee came to the area where John was preaching to be baptized by him.

As John spoke to the crowds, he gave them a warning. In fact John called the crowds by a very unusual title because he called them a "Brood of vipers". In Acts 28:3 we see that a viper is a poisonous snake whose bite is deadly because the people on the island of Malta expected Paul to drop dead after he was bitten by a viper. However, we see that Jesus also used this title to show the sinful heart of mankind. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus said, "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." The use of this title by John shows that he recognized that the hearts of many of the people that came to him were filled with evil.

As a result, John asked the people that came to him, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Here we see that John was warning the people about eternal judgment. After writing this same warning, Matthew added the thoughts that showed that John was talking about eternal judgment. Matthew 3:11-12 says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." John made it clear that the wrath to come is the judgment of eternal fire.

John clearly taught that the people must repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to God. He also pointed out the fact that true repentance will produce fruit in the lives of those who repent. Paul explained why repentance produces fruit in Philippians 2:12-13, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." God will produce godly fruit in the life of all who repent because God works in our lives to do His will.

The people thought that God would accept them because they were the descendants of Abraham. John pointed out the fact that God could create children of Abraham from the stones. People cannot depend on the belief of their parents for salvation. As someone has said, "God has no grandchildren". John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." All people must either become children of God by receiving Christ or they are still facing eternal judgment. John made it clear that every person that does not bear good fruit is still facing that eternal judgment. We then see the question of the people.

Luke 3:10-14 says, "So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?' He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.'" Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." John answered their question by describing some of the actions that will be the result from true repentance.

For the crowds who came John said that God gives people who repent of their sin of unbelief a concern for others. John said that a good way to show this love for others is to share food and clothing with those who lack these basic necessities of life. John also spoke to the tax collectors who were known for their dishonesty by telling them that they would show true repentance by becoming honest in their work as tax collectors. Like the tax collectors, the soldiers were also known for doing certain things. John said that true repentance would cause them to stop intimidating people. Repentance would also cause them to stop accusing others falsely. Then repentance would cause them to learn to be content with their wages instead of complaining.

John shows us how to explain to our physical and spiritual children the meaning of repentance so that they can explain this same thing to others. All those who repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in Christ are given a new nature with new desires. Here we see that these new desires will produce love for others and godly character in our own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain that repentance will give people a desire to obey the Lord.

11.

John Told About the Coming Ministry of Jesus

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why John was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. We saw that John told the people to repent. He said that true repentance in their hearts would be shown by a desire to obey the Lord. We also saw that John gave the people some practical ways that they could show their obedience to the Lord. In our topic today we are going to see that John went on to tell the people that the ministry of Jesus would be much greater than his ministry. We also see that John baptized Jesus as Jesus began His public ministry.

Luke 3:15-18 says, "Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." And with many other exhortations he preached to the people." Here we see that as the people heard John speak that many of them began to wonder if he could be the Christ. John realized what the people were thinking and so John made it very clear that He was not the Christ but that he had been sent to introduce the Christ.

John answered the people by talking about three different kinds of baptism. The word translated "baptism" twice in this verse means to submerge. We saw in our last topic that the main area of the ministry of John was along the Jordan River because he was preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Those who accepted his message regarding repentance were submerged in the Jordan River. That is why John said here that he baptized with water. However, John said that God had sent him to introduce One who was much greater than he was. John said that he did not even feel worthy to untie the sandal strap of that One. In this way John was saying that he did not even deserve to be a bondsman of Jesus because a bondsman would untie the sandal before he washed the feet of his master.

Then John said that the One who was much mightier than him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Jesus is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. At the moment that we repented of our sin and placed our faith in Christ, He placed the Holy Spirit in our lives. John 1:32-33 John said, "And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." We were given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our salvation.

In contrast, those who reject Christ will receive a baptism of fire. A winnowing fan was used to separate the grain from the chaff (small pieces of straw). A Christian is compared to the wheat that will be gathered and taken to heaven. A person who is not a Christian is compared to the chaff. John said that all those who are like chaff will burn with fire that is unquenchable. The word translated “unquenchable” means the fire of eternal judgment that will never be put out.

Luke 3:19-22 says, “But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison. When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”” Here we see that later Herod put John in prison because John told him that it was sin to be living with the wife of his brother. Later Herod murdered John. The details of the reason for that murder are given in Matthew 14:1-12 and Mark 6:14-29.

However, before that imprisonment and murder Jesus came to John and asked John to baptize Him. Matthew 3:13-15 says, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.” Here we see that Jesus was baptized by John for a different reason than the rest of the people. The other people were baptized to show their repentance. In contrast, Jesus is the sinless Son of God. The purpose of the baptism of Jesus was to fulfill all righteousness. This meant that Jesus was identifying Himself with sinners because He would pay the penalty for our sins and place His righteousness on us.

The Father also had a second purpose for this baptism. The Father chose this baptism as a time to publicly identify Christ as His Son. Mark 1:10-11 says, “And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”” Here we see that God opened the heavens. Then the Holy Spirit descended in a form that looked like a dove and rested on Jesus. At that moment the Father spoke from heaven and said, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Here we see that the Father personally identified Jesus as His beloved Son. The word translated “well pleased” means to take pleasure in. Here we see that the Father was very pleased that Jesus was willing to come and pay the penalty for our sins.

In Luke 3:23-38 we have the genealogy of Jesus through Mary. Verse 23 says, “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli.” The phrase “as was supposed” means to think or suppose. As we have seen in the first chapters of Luke, most people supposed that Jesus was the son of Joseph. This is why God led Luke to include the information about the way that Jesus was conceived. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” Here we have the miracle of the birth of Jesus explained so that we know that Jesus was the Son of God even though most people thought Jesus was the son of Joseph.

God had given promises to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David that the Messiah would come through their family. God told David in I Chronicles 17:11-14, “And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.” Here we see that God promised David that one of his descendents would rule forever.

The book of Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph which shows that Jesus has a legal right to be the King since Joseph was a legal descendent of King David and his son Solomon who was the next king of Israel. The descendents of Solomon continued to rule as the kings of the tribe of Judah after the other tribes of Israel rebelled against the son of Solomon. However, God judged Jeconiah (Coniah) and said that none of his sons would ever rule. Jeremiah 22:24 and 29-30 say, “As I live, says the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off...O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’” Because of that judgment the line of David through Solomon was cut off from being the eternal king.

As a result, the book of Luke gives the genealogy of Mary who was also a descendent of David through his son Nathan. Luke 3:31-32 and Luke 3:38 says in the genealogy of Mary, “the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” As we look at this genealogy we see that Jesus is the physical son of God through Adam. Then as we saw in an earlier paragraph Jesus was also the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary. That is why Jesus can be the eternal Son of God who can rule as King of kings and Lord of lords for all eternity. Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of man.

Many people have questions about how Jesus can be both the Son of God and the Son of man. That is why we want to help both our physical and our spiritual children learn to explain clearly how Jesus fulfills all of the promises that are made to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. Jesus is the One that is 100% God and 100% man and He fulfills all of those promises. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how Jesus is the Son of God that fulfills these promises.

12.

Jesus Was Tempted in the Wilderness

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of man who fulfilled all of the promises that were given regarding Him in the Old Testament. We want to help our children learn to explain that fact clearly because that will help them learn to answer many questions that others will ask them. Today in our topic we will see that Jesus responded to each of the temptations of Satan with Scripture and had victory over Satan in each of the areas where Satan had tempted Adam and Eve.

In Luke 4:1-4 we read, “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’”” In these verses we see that Christ provides us three examples for our own lives.

First, we see that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18 we read, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” We are going to see that Jesus was able to have victory over each temptation that Satan used to try and tempt Jesus. That is one reason why we are told to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. At each moment that we are filled with the Spirit we will be able to have victory over the temptations of Satan.

Second, we see that Jesus was led by the Spirit. The word translated “led” means to lead or to guide. This word is used in Galatians 5:18 which says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” As Christians we are no longer under the law because we now have the Holy Spirit to guide us. When we are led by the Spirit we will experience His peace. When we fail to be led by the Spirit and depend on ourselves we will often experience guilt. Jesus gives us an example of the importance of learning to be led by the Spirit moment by moment so that we can experience His peace. The Holy Spirit led Jesus from the Jordan River out into the wilderness where He was tempted by the Holy Spirit for forty days. During that entire period Jesus did not eat anything.

Third, we see that Jesus answered the temptations of Satan with Scripture. In fact we will see that He answers each temptation with Scripture. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Israel complained of hunger in the wilderness and God provided them with manna. However, the last part of the verse shows that mankind cannot receive spiritual life from physical food. Instead the key to spiritual life is found in the Word of God.

In I John 2:15-17 we read, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” Here we see that there are three ways that people are tempted: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These were the three ways that Eve was tempted. Genesis 3:6 says, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” This first temptation of Jesus by Satan focused on the lust of the flesh. Satan guessed that Jesus was hungry and told Him that He could turn the stones into bread to satisfy His hunger. As we have said Jesus answered this temptation by quoting Scripture.

The second temptation by Satan is given in Luke 4:5-8 where we read, “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "" Here we see that in the second temptation that Satan appealed to the lust of the eyes. Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

The word translated “authority” means the power to rule or the power of authority. Satan said that authority had been delivered to him. Here we see that Satan claimed that he had been given all authority over the nations of the world. In addition, Satan claimed that he could give this authority to whomever he wished. These were actually lies because Jesus used this same word when he said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Then Satan told Jesus that he would give this authority to Jesus if Jesus would worship him.

Jesus did not argue with Satan about who had all authority. In fact Jesus did not even call Satan a liar. Instead, Jesus again quoted from the Word of God. Deuteronomy 6:13 says, “You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.” The word translated “fear” in this verse means to reverence, honor, respect or fear. By quoting this verse Jesus made it clear to Satan that God is the only One that any person is to reverence or worship. This is a reminder that the Word of God has an answer for every temptation that Satan would use to tempt us. Satan had tempted Eve with the lust of the eyes. Here we see that Jesus defeated Satan with the Word of God when Satan tried to tempt Jesus by appealing to the lust of the eyes.

However, Satan still had one more way that he thought that he could tempt Jesus. Luke 4:9-13 says, “Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,' "and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.' " And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' " Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” This time Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem to try and tempt Him.

Satan took Jesus to the highest point on the temple in Jerusalem. This highest point was about 65 feet above the ground. The temple had a large open area or courtyard around it. The people of Jerusalem came to the temple courtyard every day during the times of prayer. During the various feast days this courtyard would be filled with Jews that came to Jerusalem for the feasts. The population of Jerusalem was about 40,000 people but for the feasts as many as a half million people would come to Jerusalem. These visitors would spend much of their time in the temple courtyard. Here we see that Satan was trying to tempt Jesus with the pride of life. Satan told Jesus that here was an opportunity to impress all of the people that might be in the temple courtyard.

As a result, Satan said, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here." In order to try and get Jesus to obey him, Satan quoted two verses from Psalm 91. Psalm 91:11-12 says, "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Satan quoted these verses to tell Jesus that the angels would hold Him so that He would not hurt Himself if He jumped from the highest point of the temple. In addition, all of the people that were in the temple courtyard would be very impressed. This was an appeal to pride. Jesus just answered Satan by quoting a verse. Deuteronomy 6:16 says, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah." The people of Israel had complained against God when they lacked water in the wilderness. Exodus 17:7 says, "So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Moses had reminded the people in Deuteronomy how they had tempted God.

Jesus used that verse to answer Satan and tell him that he was not to tempt the Lord. By this statement Jesus made it clear to Satan that He is God. Satan did not even try to deny the fact that Jesus was and is God. Instead Satan left Jesus because he had used every possible way that he had to tempt Jesus and Jesus had defeated him. Jesus had victory over temptation in each of the three areas where Eve had been tempted in the Garden of Eden. In fact Jesus had answered all of the temptations of Satan from just one book of the Old Testament. This made it clear to Satan that Jesus still had the rest of the Old Testament to answer Satan.

In these verses we see that it is important to teach our physical and spiritual children how to deal with the temptations of Satan by using the Word of God. Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!" We want to help our children understand the importance of memorizing and meditating on the Word of God in their hearts. That Word in their hearts is a key way to help them know what God says so that they will not sin against Him. We also want to help them realize that the Word of God will cause Satan to leave for a time. In this way we are preparing our children so that they can have victory when Satan tempts them. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to have victory over the temptations that they face.

13.

Jesus Began His Ministry in Nazareth

In our last topic we saw that we want to equip our physical and spiritual children so that they know how to have victory over the temptations that Satan uses to try to get them to sin. We saw that Satan uses three things to tempt people: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Eve had been tempted in each of these three areas and had chosen to sin. In contrast, Jesus defeated Satan in each of these three areas. The Lord is also able to give us His strength to defeat Satan when he tempts us. In our topic today we are going to see the public ministry of Jesus in His home town of Nazareth.

Luke 4:14-16 says, "Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." Satan had left Jesus after he failed to get Jesus to sin. Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Jesus wants us to serve Him in this same power instead of trying to serve Him in our own strength. That is why He told the disciples in Luke 24:49, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

We see that news about Jesus began to spread throughout the entire region of Galilee. The people began talking about Jesus because of His teaching in their synagogues. The teaching of Jesus was different than the teaching of their scribes. Matthew 7:28-29 tells us why the people were talking about His teaching. Those verses say, "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." The teachers of the law gave the interpretations of earlier teachers. In contrast, Christ explained the Word of God and taught the people how to apply the Word of God to their lives.

As Jesus traveled to various synagogues explaining the Word of God, he came to the town of Nazareth where he had been raised from childhood. In His own town Jesus did what He usually did. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue. It was the custom of Jesus to regularly read from the Old Testament in the synagogue. It fact reading the Old Testament was the custom of all of the teenage boys and adult men in each synagogue. Each Sabbath there would be seven to nine readings from the Old Testament. Each week several of the teenage boys and men would take their turn reading the Scripture.

Luke 4:17-22 says, "And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the

synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" The person in charge handed Jesus a copy of the scroll of Isaiah. Although they did not have chapters and verses as we do today, Jesus had read that scroll so often that He knew right where to turn to find what He wanted to read.

The part that Jesus read is the verses that are now Isaiah 61:1 and the first half of verse two. Isaiah 61:1-2 say, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn." Jesus came in the power of the Spirit so the Spirit Himself was the anointing. Notice that Jesus read all except the last part of verse two. Jesus had come to fulfill the part that He read. The phrase, "the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn," refers to the second coming of Jesus when He will come to judge the nations. Jesus did not read that part because that part is still future. He only read the part that He fulfilled in His first coming. Everyone knew that Jesus had stopped in the middle of the sentence and that was why everyone immediately looked at Him.

The part that Jesus said was fulfilled described exactly the ministry of Jesus at His first coming. Jesus came to preach the good news of the salvation to the poor. In Matthew 5:3 Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus came to preach salvation to all people and those who humbled themselves and became poor in spirit and accepted that message. Jesus also came to bind up the brokenhearted. The word translated "heal" means to cure or to make whole. Brokenhearted means to be broken in pieces. Proverbs 15:13 says, "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." Jesus came to make whole those who have been broken in spirit.

Jesus came "to preach deliverance to the captives". Deliverance means release from bondage, forgiveness or pardon. Hebrews 9:22 says, "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." In this verse the word is translated remission. In fact this word is used 17 times in the New Testament and it is always translated remission or forgiveness except in this verse. In this verse it is translated deliverance here and liberty later in the verse.

Jesus came to give recovery of sight to the blind. Jesus said in Matthew 15:14, "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." This verse shows that Christ talked about spiritual blindness as well as physical blindness. Christ gave sight to some who were physically blind but he also gave spiritual sight to many who were spiritually blind. The passage said that Jesus came to set at liberty those who are bruised. Liberty is the word that was translated captives in the previous paragraph. The word translated "bruised" means to break or shatter. Hebrews 2:15 says, "And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Jesus came to set people free from the bondage of sin.

He also came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. The acceptable year is the time when the Messiah would come to show God's favor to the people of the earth. Jesus had been standing to read the Scripture. Then He sat down to begin to teach them as that was the normal custom in a Jewish synagogue. Jesus told those in the synagogue that the passage He had just read was fulfilled in their hearing. The Jews there that day understood that Jesus had just said that He was the Messiah by that statement. Their immediate reaction was, "Is not this Joseph's son?" This is actually a statement of rejection similar to "Who does he think he is?"

Luke 4:23-30 says, "He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.' " Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way." The Jews in Nazareth had heard about the miracles that Jesus had done in Capernaum. Now they told Him to heal Himself.

This was another statement of rejection. Jesus said that a prophet is not accepted in his own country by the people who know him. By this saying Jesus was telling them that they were rejecting Him. Then Christ mentioned two Old Testament miracles of healing. God had used Elijah to provide for a widow in Zarephath of Sidon during a famine. Then God had used Elisha to heal Naaman the Syrian of leprosy. Both of these people were Gentiles. These two statements really stirred up the anger of the people of Nazareth because the two statements showed how the Jews had rejected God in the past.

The people in the synagogue were filled with anger at Jesus. In fact they were so angry that they were ready to kill Him. In addition to saying that He was the Messiah, by this statement Jesus also said that the Gentiles had received grace through the prophets of God when the Jews rejected the prophets. The city of Nazareth was built on a hill. There was a cliff on one side of the city. The Jews were so angry that they tried to throw Jesus off the cliff. They were ready to kill them in their anger.

We read that Jesus passed through the midst of them. This means that the fact that Jesus escaped was a miracle performed by God to keep them from killing Jesus. Here we see the rejection of Jesus by the people of His own home town. We will see many others also reject Jesus. However, it was not His time to die and so God performed a miracle so He could leave Nazareth. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this was a very strong statement of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah that fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. We also want them to understand that Jesus would die at His set time and not at the time of those who rejected Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand that Jesus is the Messiah.

14.

Jesus Healed the Mother-in-law of Peter

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus quoted a passage about the Messiah in the synagogue in Nazareth. Then Jesus said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". We saw that the people of Nazareth realized that this was a statement about the fact that He was the Messiah. The people of Nazareth were so angry that they tried to throw Him off the cliff of the hill on which Nazareth was located. However, the Father protected Jesus and He went on His way. Today we are going to see what Jesus did when He left Nazareth.

Jesus went to Capernaum after He was forced to leave Nazareth. Luke 4:31-37 says, "Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region." Here we see that when Jesus left Nazareth that He went to the city of Capernaum.

In Capernaum Jesus began teaching on the Sabbaths. This shows us that Jesus stayed for a period of time in Capernaum. The people of Capernaum were astonished at the teaching of Jesus. Mark 1:22 explains why the people were astonished at the teaching of Jesus. That verse says, "And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The scribes taught what earlier rabbis said about the Old Testament. In contrast, Christ explained what the Word of God taught.

One of the men in the synagogue that day was possessed by a demon (unclean spirit). This man began crying out in a loud voice saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" Here we see that demons were forced to recognize that Jesus is God. Demons also recognized that they served a different master. The demons wanted nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth because they served Satan. This demon also recognized that Jesus has the power to destroy all of the demons. Then the demon used the name of Jesus given in an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus. Psalm 16:10 says, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." This particular prophecy was a statement made by David about 1000 years before Jesus that spoke of the fact that Jesus would rise from the dead and He would not see corruption.

Jesus immediately rebuked the demon and told him to come out of the man. The demon made one last effort to try and destroy the man by causing the man to be thrown to the floor in the

middle of the synagogue. However, the demon was not able to hurt this man in his attempt to destroy him. The people in the synagogue were filled with amazement. They immediately began talking among themselves. The people recognized that Jesus had authority and power to command the unclean spirits. They realized that the demon was forced to obey Jesus. Jesus later said in Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." This authority was recognized by some of the people from the beginning of His ministry. Word quickly spread from Capernaum to the other towns throughout Galilee as the people of Capernaum talked with people from other towns.

When Jesus left the synagogue in Capernaum he immediately went to the home of Simon Peter. Luke 4:38-41 says, "Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ." Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter and was given an opportunity to minister after he entered the home of Peter.

The mother-in law of Peter was sick and had a high fever. Some of the family came to Jesus and told Him about the mother-in-law. The family members told Jesus that the mother-in-law had a high fever and asked Jesus to help her. Jesus went to the woman and rebuked the fever. Immediately the fever was gone. In fact the mother-in-law was both healed and filled with strength. She got up and immediately began serving Jesus and the others that were in the house.

The people of Capernaum heard what Jesus had done in the synagogue and possibly even in the home of Peter. As a result, as the sun was setting the people began bringing people who were sick with various diseases to be healed by Jesus. Jesus laid His hands on each sick person that was brought to Him. Jesus showed that He was the Son of God by healing every person that was sick. In addition to bringing those who were sick or diseased, the people also brought many people that were possessed with demons. Jesus also cast demons out of many people. The demons cried, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Here we see that the demons recognized that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) that had been promised to the Jews in the Old Testament.

We also see the response of Jesus to the demons when they recognized Him. Jesus rebuked the demons. Then He told the demons that they were not allowed to speak and tell who He was. The time will come when the demons will be forced to speak and tell who Jesus is. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." However, at that time they will be facing eternal judgment. It was not the desire of Jesus to have the demons tell the people that He was the Christ.

Luke 4:42-44 says, "Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." Mark tells us more about that day. Mark 1:35 says, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Here we see that the reason that Jesus had gone to a deserted place was to pray to the Father. We also see that Jesus had gone to pray long before it was even daylight. In this way Jesus showed the importance of us having regular times alone with God.

Because of the miracles that Jesus had performed the previous evening many people were looking for Jesus. Many times people are attracted by miracles but they are often attracted for the wrong purpose. John 6:26-27 says, "Jesus answered them and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." In this case Jesus had fed the 5000 the previous day and Jesus said that they were attracted to Him because of the free food.

Peter and those with Peter finally found Jesus and told Him that all of the people were looking for Him. Jesus did not respond by going to talk to the crowds. Instead Mark 1:38-39 say, "But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons." Here we see that Jesus said that His primary purpose was not just to perform miracles of physical healing.

Instead Jesus said that He was going to the next towns so that He could preach in the next towns also because that was His purpose. Jesus knew that the Father had given Him a purpose for the time of His public ministry and Jesus was focused on that purpose. In fact as Jesus prayed to the Father the night before His crucifixion Jesus said to the Father in John 17:4, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." As a result, Jesus took His disciples with Him and they traveled throughout Galilee preaching in the synagogues of the various towns and cities.

Jesus said that the Father had sent Him to preach the kingdom of God. Jesus had also told Peter and several other disciples in Mark 1:17, "Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." The purpose of Jesus was to preach the kingdom of God. The work of Jesus was to prepare a group of disciples to carry on that ministry when Jesus went back to heaven. Jesus gives us that same purpose and work. Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." We also want to show our physical and spiritual children how to make disciples. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop this purpose for their lives as well.

15.

Jesus Called His First Disciples

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children develop God's purpose for their lives. Jesus commanded each of us as Christians to make disciples so that those disciples are equipped to make other disciples. This gives every Christian a real purpose for life. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus started selecting a small group of men to be with Him so that they could be shown how to make disciples. As we follow the example of Jesus and show a small group of Christians how to make disciples we will fulfill this purpose that God has for each of us.

Luke 5:1-3 says, "So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat." The Lake of Gennesaret is also called by two other names, the Sea of Tiberius or the Sea of Galilee. Today that lake is best known by the last name, the Sea of Galilee even though it is a large fresh water lake.

The last verse of chapter four, Luke 4:44, says, "And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee." As Jesus continued to preach and teach about the kingdom of God we see that large groups of people began to follow Jesus to hear Him teach the Word of God. This made it necessary Jesus to begin teaching in places where larger crowds could gather to hear Him teach. On this particular day we see that Jesus was standing and teaching by the lake and the crowds were all trying to get closer to hear Him. There were two boats close to the place where Jesus was teaching. The fishermen were on the shore nearby washing their nets.

Then Jesus got into one of the boats. The particular boat that Jesus picked belonged to Simon Peter. Jesus asked Peter to push the boat a little way out from the land. We often find that when a large crowd came to hear Jesus that Jesus either went to a mountain or to this lake. The reason for this was probably due to the fact that the mountains and the water made the sound carry better so that even those at the back of the crowd could hear what Jesus was saying. A person speaking by a smaller lake can often be heard on the other side of the lake. Jesus then sat down in the boat and taught the people from the boat. Once Jesus sat down in the boat the people probably all sat down along the shore so that they could hear Jesus as He taught them.

Luke 5:4-7 says, "When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink." When Jesus stopped teaching, the crowds probably left the lake shore and returned to their homes. However, Jesus was not yet through for the day.

Jesus turned to Simon and told him to take his boat out to a place where the water was deeper so that he could let down his nets for a catch of fish. Commercial fishermen often fish at night because the fish are closer to the surface of the water. Here Jesus was asking Simon Peter to let down his nets during the day when most of the fish would have been near the bottom of the lake. All fishermen knew that during the day was a poor time to fish. As a result, Peter said, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing." Peter and the other disciples used the title of Master for Jesus several times in the book of Luke. Peter and the others had worked hard the entire previous night and had not caught any fish. Now Jesus was asking them to let down their nets at a poor time for fishing.

However, Peter had spent time with Jesus and had seen Him do various miracles. As a result, this caused Peter to say, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." We see that Peter was willing to be obedient to Jesus even though Peter knew that this was not a good time to catch fish. This is an important lesson for each of us to learn in our own lives. We all need to learn the importance of obedience to Jesus. John 14:15 says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Here we see that Peter was willing to show his love for Jesus by being obedient even if he did not think that it was a good time to fish.

We see the results of obedience when we obey Christ even when it does not agree with the things we have been taught by others. Peter and Andrew let down their net. Then the Lord showed that He is the One who controls the laws of nature. Immediately their net was filled with fish. In fact there was such a large number of fish in their net that the net began to break. Here we see that Jesus gave Peter and his co-workers a visual illustration of something that Paul would write many years later. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Peter suddenly realized that Jesus could do whatever He chose to do including filling their net with fish in the middle of the day.

Peter immediately motioned to their partners to come and help them. James and John quickly came with their boat to the place where Peter and Andrew were. Then they filled both boats with the fish that were in the net. In fact there were so many fish in the net that both boats began to sink as they continued to take fish out of the net. These men had never seen so many fish in their net. Suddenly these men realized that Jesus could do many other things in addition to helping the sick and casting out demons. They realized that Jesus could do anything that He chose to do. That was a very clear statement to these men that Jesus is God.

We see the response of Peter to this new understanding of the fact that Jesus is God. Luke 5:8-11 says, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him." We see that Peter immediately responded with an act of worship as he fell down in worship at the knees of Jesus.

In addition to realizing in a new way that Jesus is God, Peter also realized a very important lesson about himself. As Peter fell down in worship at the knees of Jesus, he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Peter realized that He was worshipping a holy God. Isaiah had this same response when He recognized the holiness of God. Isaiah 6:5 says, "So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." The Lord immediately sent an angel to Isaiah to purge his lips and told Isaiah that his sin had been purged. Then we see that the Lord told Isaiah in Isaiah 6:7-8, "And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." We see that this event had a similar impact on the lives of Peter and his co-workers that day.

The fishermen were all astonished at the miracle that Jesus had just performed and it made Peter very aware of his own sinful condition. Once Peter confessed that He was a sinful man, Jesus immediately changed his focus in life. He no longer needed to look at his past. Instead he could now begin to look toward the future and what Jesus was going to do through his life. Jesus then told Peter, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." This is one of the great blessings that we experience in our lives that is the result of the fact that Jesus has forgiven our sin. That forgiveness makes us new creations and Jesus is able to do through our lives whatever He chooses to do. Peter was told that he no longer needed to be fearful because of the sins of his past. Instead he could look forward to what Jesus was going to do through his life in the future. This is an important lesson for all of us in our own lives.

Peter and the other fishermen were told that they would catch men from that time on. Here we see that Jesus helped these men to understand what Jesus was going to do through their lives to give their lives that meaning and purpose. We also see the response of the four men. We see that as soon as they brought their boats to the land that they forsook all and followed Jesus. These men had known Jesus for about a year. They had even traveled with Him to various places. However, this was an invitation to them to begin to spend more time with Jesus so that He could show them how to present the message of the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to others.

In the same way we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to have meaning and purpose in their lives. True meaning in life comes from doing things that have eternal value. As we take our children with us and show them how to explain the Gospel to others, lead them to Christ and then help those new Christians grow to spiritual maturity, they will have the privilege of seeing the Lord work in the lives of others to change and transform their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to become disciples and then to make disciples.

16.

Jesus Healed Many People

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to develop true meaning and purpose in their lives. We saw that real meaning and purpose in life comes from doing things that have eternal value. Peter and his fellow fishermen had done a certain amount of traveling with Jesus during the previous year. However, they were now ready to forsake all and follow Jesus when He said that He would help them to become fishers of men. Today we are going to see that Jesus healed many people as these men traveled with Him.

Luke 5:12-16 says, "And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him. And He charged him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded." However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." Here we see that a man came to Jesus whose body was full of leprosy. This would show that his leprosy was extremely serious.

However, this man had heard about the healing that Jesus has been doing in various cities. As a result, he came to Jesus and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." This man had faith that Jesus was able to heal him. Jesus took action before He even answered. Jesus touched the man and then said that He was willing. Leprosy was considered a very contagious disease so lepers would call out, "Unclean! Unclean!" anytime someone came close to them. In contrast to most people Jesus showed His love by touching the man. Then he told the man to be cleansed. The leprosy immediately left the man. Here we see that Jesus always healed a person completely when He healed.

Then Jesus gave instructions to the man. The Old Testament law required that a leper had to be pronounced clean by a priest and then offer a sacrifice for his cleansing. Jesus told the man to carry out the instructions of the law. Jesus had a very important reason for telling the man to do what the law required. Jesus told the man to carry out the instructions of the law as a testimony to the priests. The last recorded person who had been healed of leprosy in the Old Testament was Naaman, the Syrian, in II Kings 5. II Kings 5:14 says, "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Naaman had been healed about 850 years before Jesus was born. This would have been a very powerful testimony to the Jewish priests.

However, the word quickly spread throughout Galilee about this miracle and this caused great multitudes of people to want to hear Jesus and especially to be healed by Jesus of their various infirmities. We see that the people were focused on their physical needs rather than their spiritual needs. That was the same focus of the people after Jesus fed the 5000 in John 6. Jesus

told the crowds in that chapter in John 6:26-27, “Jesus answered them and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” Jesus told the crowds that they needed to seek everlasting life instead. We see that because the crowds had a wrong purpose that Jesus often went out into the wilderness and prayed to the Father.

Luke 5:17-20 says, “Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."” One day Jesus was teaching in a house and a large crowd gathered to hear Him. This crowd included Pharisees and teachers of the law (scribes) in addition to many other people. These people had come from towns throughout Galilee and Judea and even included people from the city of Jerusalem.

Many people had been coming to Jesus for healing so everyone knew that Jesus could heal. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were there because they were critical of the teaching of Jesus not because they wanted to learn from Him. However, the multitudes of people knew that Jesus had the power to heal. As a result, Mark 2:2-3 says, “Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.” Everyone was trying to hear Jesus preach so they gathered around the doors and windows to hear what Jesus was saying inside. Then we see that four men came carrying their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

The four men could not even get close to the door of the house to bring their friend to Jesus. As a result, the four men carried him up on the flat roof the house. Then they removed the tiling from the roof until they had a hole large enough to let the man down between the beams that held up the roof. Jesus saw and honored the faith of the four friends. Needless to say all of the people in the house saw the faith of the four friends as they saw the tiles being removed until there was a hole between the beams large enough to let the paralyzed man be lowered through the roof. However, Jesus did not touch this man as He had touched the leper. Instead Jesus recognized the faith of the four friends by saying, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” Jesus wanted the scribes and Pharisees to see that He was God and had the power to forgive sins.

Luke 5:21-26 says, “And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he rose

up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!" The scribes and Pharisees immediately began to think various thoughts.

This man had a physical problem that caused him to be paralyzed. However, that was not his greatest need. His greatest need was the forgiveness of sin. Because Jesus saw the faith of the four friends, Jesus chose to deal with the greatest need of the man first and forgive his sin. The first thought that the scribes and Pharisees had was that Jesus was guilty of speaking blasphemy. They recognized that only God can forgive sins. That meant one of two things. Either Jesus was God or He was speaking blasphemy which was punishable by death. The scribes and Pharisees had come because they were critical of Jesus and so they refused to admit that Jesus is God. However, Jesus immediately showed them in a second way that He is God.

We see that Jesus knew their thoughts. Matthew 9:4-5 tells us, "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk!'" The fact that Jesus knew their thoughts showed that He had the power to examine their hearts and minds. Jesus told them that the thoughts of their hearts were evil and that He had both the power to forgive sins and the power to heal. Jesus then said that He would show them that He is God and did have the power to forgive sins. Then Jesus spoke a second time to the paralyzed man and said, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." The man immediately got up and took the thing on which he had been carried and left to go to his own home. However, he was filled with glory to God for what the Lord had done in his life that day.

Meanwhile, there were two different reactions by the people that were in the house that day. The scribes and Pharisees had hearts that were filled with evil. This evil would continue to grow in their hearts. In the next several events mentioned in the book of Luke we will see that the scribes and Pharisees will continue to show the evil that was in their hearts. In contrast, we see a different response from the crowds. We see that the people were all amazed. They gave glory to God because they had seen a paralyzed man healed. However, they were also filled with fear. The word translated fear means "to be filled with fear, dread or terror". John 7:13 says, "However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews." The crowds recognized that God had done a miracle but they also had a fear of the scribes and Pharisees. As a result, they said that they had seen strange things that day. The word translated "strange things" means unexpected or uncommon.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that they will also get a variety of reactions when they tell others that Jesus is able to forgive sins. Some people will be like the scribes and Pharisees and will be controlled by evil thoughts. Others will act out of fear of the people around them. Some will say they have heard unexpected things. However, some will believe and place their faith in Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to tell others that Jesus is able to forgive sins.

17.

Jesus Called Levi to Follow Him

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our children learn how to explain to others that Jesus is able to forgive sins. We also saw that we need to prepare our children for the fact that they will experience different reactions when they share that message with others. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus invited Levi to follow Him. We will also see that the scribes and Pharisees find a different reason to complain and speak against Jesus.

Luke 5:27-29 says, "After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them." The word translated "tax office" was the name used for the toll house or the place where a tax collector sat to collect taxes. The tax collectors were hated by the Jews and the people of others nations for two reasons. First, they worked for the hated Roman government. Second, they usually charged more than the taxes and kept the additional amount for themselves. As a result, they were considered thieves or crooks.

One day Jesus went looking for Levi (called Matthew after he became a disciple of Jesus). When Jesus saw Matthew at the tax office, Jesus said, "Follow Me". This was an invitation to Matthew just like the invitation that Jesus had given to Peter and the other fishermen. This meant that Matthew had to make a choice. The word translated "he left" means to leave behind, to forsake or to abandon. This word is used several times in the New Testament to quote what God said to Adam. One example is in Ephesians 5:31 where we read, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." As a result, we see that Matthew chose to abandon the job of tax collector and chose instead to follow Jesus. Here we see a real example of the meaning of repentance. Matthew was turning from his idol of money and turning to God by following Jesus.

Levi immediately had a great feast at his house so that all of his tax collector coworkers and other friends could also meet Jesus. A great number of tax collectors and others came to share in this feast. Then they all sat down together with Jesus. Jesus described the feeling of the Pharisees and lawyers when he said in Luke 7:34, "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" The Pharisees felt that because Jesus chose to be a friend to the tax collectors and sinners and eat with them that He certainly could not be respected by them as self righteous Pharisees.

That is why Luke 5:30-32 says, "And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." The Pharisees hated to even talk to tax collectors. They would never have thought of sitting down and eating with them.

As a result, the scribes and Pharisees complained against the disciples of Jesus. Here we see that the Pharisees spoke against those who had become Jesus disciples and were following Him. They asked the disciples were they would even think of eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Actually they were probably trying to find out why Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners. Because of their pride, the Pharisees could not understand why Jesus would be interested in being a friend of people that the Pharisees considered the outcasts of society.

As a result, Jesus answered the question of the Pharisees. However, Jesus answered by giving an illustration. Jesus asked if it was the people who were well that went to the doctor or the people that were sick. The Pharisees were very religious and had many rules that they followed. They thought that those rules caused them to have a healthy relationship with God. They did not even realize that they were guilty of the sin of pride. In contrast, the tax collectors and sinners knew that they were sinful. In fact the Pharisees made them feel like they were so sinful that God would never accept them. The tax collectors and sinners knew that they needed their sins forgiven.

Jesus said that He did not come to call the righteous. Instead Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. The difference was that the tax collectors and sinners knew that they were sinners and the scribes and Pharisees thought that they were righteous. They were self righteous and filled with pride because they thought that all of their rules were pleasing to God. They did not realize that their condition had been described by Jeremiah many hundreds of years earlier. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Many years earlier the Lord had said to Samuel in I Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Jesus looked at the hearts of the Pharisees and scribes and knew their sinful condition.

The Pharisees did not want to hear about the need for repentance so they quickly asked a different question. Luke 5:33-35 says, "Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days." The Pharisees chose a very religious sounding question. They said that the disciples of John often fasted and made prayers. They said that the disciples of the Pharisees did the same. Then they asked why the disciples of Jesus chose to eat and drink, especially with sinners, instead of doing religious things like fasting and saying prayers.

Jesus answered their question with a very interesting illustration. He said that the friends of the groom do not fast at the wedding of the groom. Instead the friends celebrate his wedding with the groom. The friends can always fast later when the groom is taken away from them. Then they will fast in those days. Here we see that Christ compared Himself to the groom at his wedding. Since Christ was with His disciples there was no need for them to fast at that time. Later after Jesus returned to heaven the disciples could choose to fast but not while Jesus was with them.

Jesus then spoke a parable to the Pharisees. Luke 5:36-39 says, "Then He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, the old is better.'" In this parable Jesus gave two illustrations to the Pharisees.

If a person has an old garment like an old shirt and that person also has a new shirt, the person does not cut a piece of cloth out of the new shirt to fix the old shirt for two reasons. First that would ruin the new shirt. Second the material from the new shirt would not match the old shirt. The Pharisees probably did not understand that Christ was teaching them an important spiritual principle. The Old Testament or Covenant shows that all mankind is sinful and guilty before God. Jesus did not come to try and repair the system of sacrifices that were a covering for sin. Instead Jesus came to provide a New Covenant. He came to pay the penalty for sin so that sin could be forgiven and taken away. Jesus came to buy us back from penalty of sin and provide forgiveness of sin.

In the second illustration Christ said that a person does not put new wine into old wineskins. New wine expands as the wine ferments. The new wine will break the old wineskins and the wine will be spilled. Because the new wine will break the old wineskins the old wineskins will become broken and useless. The Pharisees had many traditions that they had added to the Old Testament. These traditions had nothing to do with the message of the forgiveness of sins. They were just traditions. Later Paul wrote about similar practices when he said in Colossians 2:20-23 says, "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations--Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." Here we see that the traditions of self-imposed religion have no value against the sins of the flesh. The Pharisees with their many traditions had no desire to hear about the new life that Jesus offered.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that many people today also follow their own traditions instead of repenting of their sin of unbelief and placing their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such traditions may make people feel good about themselves but they are of no value because such traditions can never pay the penalty for sin. In contrast, the tax collectors and sinners realized that they were sinners that needed to repent. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to follow the example of Jesus as you share His love with others.

18.

Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Jesus and share the message of repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus showed us by His example that we are to share that message with those who are rejected by their culture and society. We also saw that many people who are religious are like the scribes and Pharisees who were more concerned about following their own traditions than they are about the spiritual needs of others. In our topic today we will see that the Pharisees continued their attempts to condemn Jesus.

Luke 6:1-5 says, "Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?" And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."" Here we see that Jesus and His disciples were walking through the grainfields on the Sabbath.

As the disciples walked through the grainfields, they were doing something that they had probably done many times in their lives. They were breaking off heads of grain and rubbing them with their hands. In the law in Deuteronomy 23:25 we read, "When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain." Here we see that the law clearly gave the people the right to break off heads of grain and eat them when they were hungry and it was not considered stealing. It was only considered stealing if a person came to the field of another and began to harvest their grain.

However, the Pharisees saw this as an opportunity to condemn the disciples of Jesus. As a result, some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" The Pharisees were focusing on two things that the disciples were doing. First, they were picking the heads of grain on the Sabbath. Second, they were rubbing the heads of grain together in their hands to remove the outer shell. The previous paragraph shows that it was lawful to pick the heads of grain. However, the things that the Pharisees said were unlawful were the picking and the rubbing together on the Sabbath. They were accusing the disciples of working on the Sabbath by picking off the heads of grain and rubbing them together.

Jesus took charge and answered the question that the Pharisees had asked the disciples. Jesus spoke of what David did when he and the men with him were hungry. David asked the priest for food for his men. I Samuel 21:4 and 6 say, "And the priest answered David and said, "There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." ...So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place

on the day when it was taken away.” The priests had not yet eaten the bread that had been taken out of the tabernacle. Leviticus said that was to be done on the Sabbath day. After using this illustration, Jesus said, “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Here we see that Jesus told them again that He is God.

The Pharisees could not reject the answer of Jesus after they heard the illustration that Jesus gave about David. However, they began to watch Jesus even closer on the Sabbaths to try and condemn the fact that Jesus said He is God. Soon they had another opportunity on a different Sabbath. Luke 6:6-8 says, “Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, “Arise and stand here.” And he arose and stood.” We see that on this particular Sabbath that Jesus was teaching again in the synagogue.

The scribes and Pharisees were there to see if they could find any reason to condemn Jesus. They watched closely to see what Jesus would do when they saw a man with a withered right hand in the synagogue. The word translated “withered” means dry or withered. Due to various diseases a hand can wither or shrink so that it becomes very small. When that happens it is impossible for a person to use that hand to do most things. Here we see that the withered hand of this man was his right hand. The Old Testament did not prohibit healing on the Sabbath. However, the Jews had a tradition that said a person could not practice medicine on the Sabbath unless the life of a person was in danger. This withered hand did not put the life of this man in danger.

Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees were watching Him closely. Jesus also knew their thoughts and that they were looking for an opportunity to accuse Jesus of breaking their traditions. As a result, Jesus asked the man to stand so that everyone could see him. We saw in a topic on the last chapter that Jesus knew their thoughts in Luke 5:22. That same miracle is recorded in Matthew and Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 9:4, “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?” Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees were again thinking evil in their hearts and that was why they were watching Him so closely.

Jesus chose to publicly confront the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. As the man was standing there, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question. Luke 6:9-11 says, “Then Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?” And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.” The Jewish law forbade the Jews from working on the Sabbath day.

However, Jesus used this question to make a clear distinction that would reveal the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The opposite of doing good is doing evil. The opposite of saving life is destroying life. The Jews were allowed both to do good and to save life on the Sabbath day. The real problem that day was in the hearts of the Pharisees. Mark 3:4-5 says, “Then He said to

them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other." Here we see that Jesus was grieved by the hardness of the hearts of the Pharisees. Jesus had anger at the sin shown by this hardness of heart. At the same time Jesus loved the sinners who demonstrated this hardness of heart because He died for their sins as well as ours.

The word translated "good" comes from the word which means that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. The word means to do what is right or to be a help to someone. III John 11 says, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God." Here we see that the one who does good is of God. I Peter 2:15 says, "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The hearts of the scribes and Pharisees were controlled by their evil thoughts. They had no concern to help a man who had a physical need.

After Jesus asked His question, He carefully looked at each of the scribes and Pharisees and gave them an opportunity to answer His question. None of the scribes or Pharisees gave Jesus an answer because each of the men knew in His heart that he would condemn himself if he answered that question. Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man with the withered hand did as Jesus said and as he stretched out his right hand it was restored. The word translated "restored" means to restore to its former condition. Here we see that his right hand became normal just like his left hand. This was a great miracle and everyone in the synagogue had the opportunity to watch as the miracle happened.

Jesus had confronted the sin of the scribes and Pharisees by asking His question. Their hypocrisy was clearly shown by that question. As a result, these men were filled with rage. The scribes and Pharisees had been humbled by Jesus in front of all of the people. Luke 18:14 says, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Jesus made this statement as He finished giving the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. In that parable the Pharisee had boasted about his good works as he prayed. In contrast, the tax collector had asked the Lord to be merciful to him because he was a sinner. That is why Jesus said that the one who exalts himself will be humbled. Jesus had just humbled the scribes and Pharisees in front of the people in the synagogue and so they were filled with rage and discussed what to do to Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that Jesus made it clear that it is always right to do good to others. One of the ways that we help them learn how to have an effective ministry is to show them how to do things that are good in their character and beneficial in their effects. The Lord will greatly bless their service for Him as they learn to do good to others whenever they have the opportunity. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to do good to others.

19.

Jesus Chose the Twelve to be Apostles

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to do good to others as they serve the Lord. We saw that Jesus made it very clear that it is always right to do those things that are good and beneficial to others. This is one of the ways that we show the love of Christ to others. Today we are going to see that Jesus chose the Twelve Apostles. We will also see that Jesus gives us a very important example for our own lives by what He did before He chose the twelve.

Luke 6:12-16 says, “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.” Jesus had a large group of followers that followed Him. However, Jesus knew that it was necessary for Him to choose a much smaller group in order to equip them to carry on His ministry when He returned to heaven.

The night before Jesus chose that smaller group we see that He went out to a mountain and spent the entire night in prayer. In this way Jesus gave us an example of a key to effective ministry for our own lives. Jesus showed us that we select a small group of people to train after much prayer. Then those who are chosen will be the ones that God wants us to train.

Mark 3:14-15 gives us three reasons why Jesus chose these twelve men. Those verses say, “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.” First, Jesus chose the twelve so that they could spend much time with Him to help them grow in godly character and learn how to serve Him by His example. In the same way, as we choose a small group to be with us we show them how to develop godly character and show them how to serve the Lord. Second, Jesus chose the twelve so that He could show them what to preach and then send them out to preach. Third, Jesus chose the twelve to have power both to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” The twelve were given these signs of healing and casting out demons to verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We also learn another thing about the way Jesus trained the disciples. In every list of the disciples Peter is always mentioned first, Philip is mentioned fifth and James, the son of Alphaeus is mentioned ninth. Here we see that Jesus divided the twelve into three smaller groups. Andrew, James and John are always the next three mentioned after Peter. Bartholomew (Nathanael), Matthew and Thomas are always the three mentioned after Philip. Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James and Judas Iscariot are always the three mentioned

after James the son of Alphaeus. As they walked along the roads traveling from place to place this made it possible for Jesus to spend time with each of these three smaller groups and discuss their questions.

Luke 6:17-21 says, "And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh." Here we see one of the things that happened after Jesus had chosen the twelve.

In these verses we see that Jesus came down the mountain with His disciples. This included a group of His other disciples in addition to the Twelve. Jesus and this larger group of disciples were met by a very large group of people who came from several different areas to see Jesus. Some came to hear Jesus. Others came to be healed of their diseases. A third group that came were those who were tormented by unclean spirits (demons). In addition, the people in the large crowd also wanted to get close enough to Jesus to touch Him. We see that power went out from Jesus and He healed them all whether they had diseases or were tormented by demons.

Jesus knew that the crowds were there because of their own needs or because they were curious. However, we see that the concern of Jesus was to teach and equip His disciples. As a result, Jesus turned and spoke directly to His disciples. The crowds were free to listen but His concern was to teach those who had a greater commitment. Matthew 5:1-2 says, "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying." Matthew also shows us that Christ focused on teaching His disciples even though there was a much larger group listening.

Christ explained why He chose to explain His teaching to His disciples at another time. Mark 4:11-12 says, "And He said to them, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them." Christ never rejected the multitudes. However, His focus was to teach and train His disciples. I Corinthians 2:13-15 says, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one." Only people who have repented of their unbelief and placed their faith in Christ have the Holy Spirit to give them understanding. As a result, Jesus focused on teaching and equipping His disciples but also gave all who came to Him the opportunity to hear what He taught.

Jesus said that several groups of people will experience blessing. First, the poor are promised blessing. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of

heaven.” Those who are poor in spirit are those who humble themselves before God. Second, those who hunger now are promised blessing. Matthew 5:6 says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Here we see that Jesus talked about those who hunger and thirst for the things that are right in the sight of God. Third, those who weep now are promised blessing. Matthew 5:4 says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Here we see that those who mourn because of true sorrow for sin will be comforted.

Luke 6:22 -26 says, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” In these verses we see that a fourth group is promised blessing.

This group promised blessing is those who are hated for Jesus' sake. Jesus told His disciples that people would hate them, exclude them, revile them and cast out their name as evil because of their service for Jesus. Jesus told them and us that when such things happen that we can rejoice and leap for joy because we can look forward to the reward that the Lord has for us in heaven. Joy is based on what the Lord is doing in our lives. Jesus told His disciples that the fathers of those who rejected them rejected the prophets.

The word translated “woe” means alas or woe and is an expression of grief. First, the rich will experience grief because they chose to seek their riches on earth instead of looking for heavenly riches. Second, those who are full now will experience grief because the time will come when they will be needy and have nothing. Third, those who laugh now will have lives that are filled with sorrow and weeping for all eternity. Matthew 13:49-50 says, “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Fourth, Jesus said that those who had everyone praising them and speaking well of them at that time would also experience grief because their fathers spoke the same way about the false prophets. In fact such individuals were the false prophets of the time of Jesus.

Here we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and learn how to explain to others that all those who truly follow Jesus will have opposition here on this earth. In contrast, those who are approved by the world today will face eternal judgment for all eternity. Life on this earth is very short and the judgment of those who reject Jesus will be eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop eternal values instead of earthly values.

Jesus Taught that we are to Love our Enemies

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly understand the difference between those things which are just for this earth and those things which have eternal value. We saw that those who seek the things that have eternal value will experience eternal blessing. In contrast, we saw that those who seek the things that have earthly value will experience eternal judgment. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus taught us about the way that we should treat our enemies.

Luke 6:27-31 says, “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” The law condemns while Jesus came to set us free. John 8:36 says, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Then Galatians 5:13 adds, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” In these verses we see that Jesus tells all who follow Him how to show that love to our enemies.

First, Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. The word that is translated “love” in this verse is not the word for loving a family member. Instead it is the word that is used in John 3:16 where we read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Here we see that we are to love our enemies with the same love with which God loves them. That means that we are to follow the example of Jesus and love others as He loved them. Jesus demonstrated that love when He spoke while on the cross regarding those who had condemned and crucified Him. Luke 23:34 says, “Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.”

Second, Jesus said that we are to do good to those who hate us. The word translated “good” in this verse means to speak well of or to do good to. Jesus used this word when He said in Matthew 12:12, “Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Jesus makes it clear that we are to speak well or do good even to those who hate us. Third, Jesus said that we are to bless those who curse us. The word translated “curse” means to pronounce a curse on a person. People may do that to us. However, Romans 12:14 says, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” We are to return such curses with a blessing. I Peter 3:9 says, “Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” We are to pray that God will bring a blessing on such a person.

Fourth, Jesus said that when we are hit on one cheek that we are to turn the other cheek also. Here we see that we are not to resist an evil person when that person makes a personal attack on

us. We are to show the same attitude to the one who takes away our cloak. A cloak was like a shirt and a tunic was like an undershirt. When someone takes our shirt we are not to resist the person to try and keep our undershirt. We are to do the same when a person takes our money. When someone steals our goods, we are not to fight the person and try to demand those things back. We cannot change the actions of evil people. However, we can treat evil people in the way that we would like to be treated instead of treating them as they have just treated us.

Luke 6:32-36 says, "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." Here we see that our actions as Christians are to be very different from those who are not Christians.

Even a very evil person loves his friends. A very evil person will do good to those who are his friends and practice evil with him. They also loan money to each other and expect to be repaid. As a result, we have not shown that we are different from those who reject Christ by just loving our friends. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God did not wait to show His love to us until we repented of our sins. Jesus did not wait to show His love until we followed Him. Instead both the Father and Christ showed their love to us while we were still sinners. That is the same thing that Jesus is telling us to do to those who are still following their evil ways. We are to show our love to others even when they are in total rebellion against God and may be persecuting us as a result.

That is why Jesus said that we are to love those who are our enemies. Various religions teach nonresistance. However, Jesus said the way to really fulfill the Word of God is to take the lead by showing love and kindness to those who are evil. Matthew 7:12 says, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Jesus said that we actually fulfill the Old Testament by taking positive action and treating people like we want to be treated. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40, "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." The parable of the Good Samaritan defines a neighbor as anyone in need and we see that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We take the leadership in doing that by showing kindness to those who treat us as enemies and even those who do evil to us.

We are to show that kindness to our enemies by doing good to them. We are to give to them when we see that they have a need even though we know that we will probably never be repaid by the enemy. However, the Lord said that when we take the leadership by doing good to those who are evil that our eternal reward will be great. Since God has all ready shown that kind of love to every person in the world by sending Jesus to pay the penalty for their sins, we will be acting like the sons of the Most High because we are showing that same kindness to them. Many times our actions will draw them to Christ.

God is kind to both the unthankful and the evil. We are to be merciful to those who are evil just as the Father is merciful to them. This form of the word translated “merciful” is used only one other place in the New Testament. James 5:11 says, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” In this verse we are reminded that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. We are to have this same mercy even to those who treat us as enemies.

Luke 6:37-38 says, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Here we see four things that we are to avoid or to do to show the love of God to our enemies.

First, we are to avoid judging our enemies. The word translated “judge” means to separate, to give a negative opinion or to pronounce judgment. James 4:11-12 says, “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” We are to leave all judgment to the Lord. Second, we are to avoid condemning another. The word translated “condemn” means to pronounce a person guilty. The Lord is the One who is the Righteous Judge.

Third, we are to forgive our enemies. The word translated “forgive and forgiven” in this verse means to release or to set free. If we forgive those who sin against us day by day, we will experience the peace of God because we will have a clear conscience. Luke 13:12-13 says, “But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” In these verses the word is translated loosed.

Fourth, we are told to give to our enemies. The word translated “give and given” in this verse means to bestow a gift or to give someone something that will benefit the other person. We see that the Lord will greatly bless us when we have a generous spirit even to those who treat us as enemies. The Jews wore long robes. When someone gave a person grain, the person would take off this robe and the grain would be poured onto the robe. Here Jesus said that when we give to our enemies that He will cause others to give us so much that it will overflow the robe. Jesus said that we will receive in the same way that we have given. Here we see an important lesson that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example. We want to treat our enemies with the love of Jesus. When we show this kind of love to our enemies, the Lord will give us His peace and will use our actions to draw those enemies to Himself. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show the love of Jesus to all.

21.

Jesus Taught the Importance of the Right Foundation

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to show the love of Jesus to those who treat us as enemies. As we show the love of Jesus to others the Lord works in their hearts and many times uses that love to draw others to Himself. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples about the importance of building on the right foundation.

In Luke 6:39-42 we read, “And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye.” The word translated “blind” speaks about a person who is physically blind, mentally blind or spiritually blind. In this parable Jesus used physical blindness to illustrate spiritual blindness.

Jesus was talking to His disciples about the importance of loving their enemies. The disciples viewed Jesus as their Teacher. Jesus had just made it plain to the disciples that they could not be spiritually blind and lead others. Instead they needed to follow the example of their teacher. However, at the same time Jesus also gave them a promise about what would happen as they followed His example. The word translated “perfectly trained” means to mend what is broken, to strengthen, or to make complete. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” Here we see that the word is translated make complete. Jesus promised the disciples that as they matured and followed His example that they would become like their Teacher. In the same way, as they loved their enemies they would lead them by example.

At the same time Jesus explained to the disciples that they had to live what they taught. To illustrate His point Jesus compared a tiny speck to a large piece of wood (a plank). He said that to be an effective example we must examine our own lives first. Many times it is easy to see sins in the lives of others. At the same time we may not even look at the sins in our own lives. Jesus compared the sins of others to the tiny speck and the sins in our own lives that we do not even notice to a large piece of wood. In order to help others, we need to first take the large piece of wood out of our own eye and then we will be able to see clearly to take the tiny speck out of the eye of a brother. Here we see that Jesus made it clear that we need to always examine our own lives and correct those things that are sin before we try to correct others who have sins in their lives. Then we will be able to help others instead of judge them.

Luke 6:43-45 says, “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Jesus wanted His disciples to realize that they would produce people like themselves. If they were true disciples that followed Jesus, they would be like a good tree. If they were hypocrites or false teachers, they would be like a bad tree.

Jesus said that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. John the Baptist had said in Matthew 3:8, “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” Jesus here taught that those who had repented and were His true followers would bring forth good fruit. Those who had not repented would bring forth bad fruit. Jesus said in Matthew 7:15-17, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” Jesus said that a false prophet could never bear good fruit.

Jesus said that the fruit that a person bears shows the condition of the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” That is why Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-35, “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Those who have an evil heart will speak evil. In contrast, those who have a good treasure in their heart (Jesus Christ) will speak good things. True followers of Jesus will practice Ephesians 4:15 because Jesus is in their heart. That verse says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--.” As we learn to follow Jesus, we will learn to do two things. First, we will learn to speak the truth. Second, we will learn to speak the truth in love. In that way we will become like our Teacher.

Whether a person is good or evil, Jesus taught His disciples that out of the abundance of each person’s heart, that person will speak. The word that is translated “abundance” means that in which a person delights or that which fills the heart. James 3:14-15 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” In contrast, II Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” The self-seeking heart will both speak and do evil. In contrast, the person with a pure heart will speak and do the things that please God.

Luke 6:46-49 says, “But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” We saw that in this chapter that Jesus was teaching His disciples. At the same time there was a great crowd that had also gathered and was listening to Jesus as He taught His disciples.

As we have seen, Jesus spoke to address both those who were true followers and also those who were only curious about Jesus or even critical of Him. Now Jesus gave a final message to all who were there especially those who were just curious or even opposed to Jesus. Jesus began this final thought with a question, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" The word translated "Lord" means the one to whom a person or thing belongs. However, many of the people just use the word as a title. Here Jesus made it clear that one who called Jesus, Lord, from His heart would also be obedient to the things that Jesus said.

Jesus showed what it actually meant to be a true disciple. One who is a true disciple of Jesus comes to Jesus, hears the sayings of Jesus and obeys them. Jesus explained what such a person is like. A true disciple is like a person that builds a house on a rock. Such a person makes a choice that requires action. First the person must dig deep. Then he must lay the foundation on the rock. However, there are also rewards when a house is built on a rock as the foundation. When the storm or the flood comes, the water can beat against the house but the flood will not even shake the house because that house has a solid foundation on the rock. In contrast, Jesus said that the person who only heard His Word and did nothing about it is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the flood came the stream beat against that house and immediately that house fell. In fact that house was totally ruined.

We see that Jesus explained that there is a great difference between a disciple and a person that is just religious. A person can be very religious and never come to Jesus. Such a person depends upon his own efforts to please God. Cain was such a person. He brought the fruit of his own efforts. In contrast, his brother Abel brought the sacrifice that God required as a covering for sin. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel and rejected the efforts of Cain.

Jesus began this sermon by talking about those who came to Him with a humble spirit, had a hunger for the kingdom of God, and came with an attitude of repentance. Such individuals built on the right foundation because Jesus was their foundation. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Jesus came to give abundant life to all who will build their lives on Him. In contrast, Jesus warned that those who depended on their own efforts would be destroyed. We want to help our children learn to explain to others the importance of building on the right foundation. That will happen as they learn to explain why Jesus is the One foundation that gives life because He is the One who could and did pay the penalty for sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how to build on that foundation.

Jesus Healed a Servant and a Son

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of building their lives on the right foundation. That right foundation begins when people come to Jesus with a humble spirit that causes them to have an attitude of repentance. In this topic we are going to learn about Jesus healing a servant and then raising a son from the dead.

Luke 7:1-5 says, “Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.” Jesus had spoken to a larger group of disciples after He chose the Twelve. A great crowd of people that had come from many areas heard Jesus as He taught His disciples. Then we see that Jesus went to Capernaum.

A Roman centurion lived in the area of Capernaum. This centurion had a servant that was very precious to him. This servant became sick and was close to the point of death when Jesus came to Capernaum. The centurion had heard about Jesus. He asked some of the leaders of the Jews if they would go and tell Jesus about his sick servant and plead with Jesus to heal the servant. The fact that the elders of the Jews told Jesus about this centurion showed that they had a high respect for him. They knew that this centurion loved the Jewish nation and said that he had even built a synagogue for the Jews.

Luke 7:6-10 says, “Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.” Jesus was always ready to show compassion to those who asked Him for help.

However, the centurion did not feel that he was even worthy to have Jesus come into his house because he was a Gentile. As a result, he sent some friends with a message to Jesus as Jesus came toward his house. The centurion told the messengers to tell Jesus that he did not feel worthy to have Jesus come into his house. The fact that he felt he was not worthy is the reason why he had not come to Jesus personally to make the request. The word translated “worthy” means to have weight or value. The centurion felt that he had no value in the sight of Jesus because he was a Gentile. In Luke 15:18-19 the lost son was in the pigpen and decided, “I will

arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” Just like in the time of Jesus, many people today feel that they are so sinful that they are not worthy to be accepted by Jesus. They need to know that Jesus will always show compassion and accept them.

Jesus had just taught His disciples in Luke 6:20, “Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Here we see that Jesus had a living illustration of what it means to be poor in spirit. This Roman centurion had shown by His attitude that he had humbled himself before God. This was a real example of true humility and faith. As a result, this centurion could look forward to being in the kingdom of God because He recognized by faith that Jesus is God.

Because he felt unworthy, the centurion asked Jesus to just speak the word and his servant would be healed. He then gave his reason for that request. He said that as a centurion he was under the authority of the Roman government. At the same time he had one hundred soldiers who were under his authority. He could tell these soldiers to go and they would go or he could tell them to come to him and they would come to him.

A crowd of people was following Jesus and Jesus immediately used these words to talk about the faith of the Roman centurion. Jesus said that He had not found such a great faith among any of the people of Israel. In this way Jesus pointed out that the Roman centurion had shown great faith in the fact that Jesus is God because he knew that if Jesus spoke the word that his servant would be healed even though Jesus never saw or touched the servant. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Here we see that faith believes the promises of God even though we have not seen the promised thing happen yet. That was the faith that the Roman centurion showed. Those who brought Jesus the message found the servant that had been sick totally healed when they returned to the house.

The next day Jesus went to a city called Nain where He showed great compassion to a widow. Luke 7:11-13 says, “Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.”” When Jesus left Capernaum many of His disciples went with Him. In addition, a large crowd of other people also followed Jesus that day as He went to the city of Nain.

When they came close to the gate of the city of Nain, they met a large crowd of people coming out of the city. These people were all a part of a funeral procession and they were carrying the body of a dead man out of the city to be buried. This man was the only son of his mother. In addition, his mother was a widow. This meant that she had no husband or other sons to care for her during her older years of life. Such widows had a very difficult time in that period because they had no one to provide for their basic needs. In fact many people took advantage of them. Jesus warned in Luke 20:46-47, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at

feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." In these verses Jesus warned about the judgment that would come to those who stole the houses of widows and then tried to cover up their sin by praying long prayers for the widows.

In contrast, Jesus saw this widow and knew that the man being carried out of the city was her only son. Jesus was filled with compassion for this needy widow. The word translated "compassion" meant to be filled with love and pity for a person in great need. This same word is used in Matthew 9:36-38 where we read, "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" Here we see that the love of Jesus for the multitudes that were spiritually lost caused Jesus to ask us to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest.

Because of His compassion, Jesus told the widow, "Do not weep." Luke 7:14-17 says, "Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region." Here we see that Jesus then went and touched the open coffin.

The men who were carrying the coffin stood still when Jesus touched the coffin. Then they had what was probably the most amazing experience of their entire lives. Jesus just said, "Young man, I say to you, arise," and the dead young man in the coffin sat up and began to speak. Jesus then presented the young man to his mother. We saw that Jesus had many disciples plus a large crowd that had been following Him. In addition, many people were a part of the funeral procession. All of these people were suddenly filled with fear. The word translated "fear" means fear, terror or reverence. The kind of fear that the people had that day is described by what they did. They immediately glorified God. The people recognized that God had raised up a great prophet among them. It had been four hundred years since Israel had any prophets and so the people suddenly realized that God had visited His people.

We see the report about Jesus raising this young man from the dead quickly spread among the Jews. This miracle had happened in the area of Galilee. However we read that the news of this miracle spread throughout all of Judea and the surrounding region as well. This means that people throughout both Galilee and Judea heard about this miracle. There had been people raised from the dead in the Old Testament. However, that had happened during the time of Elijah and Elisha more than 800 years earlier. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why this miracle caused such great amazement among the Jews. That way they will be able to explain why Jesus chose to demonstrate His compassion in this way. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain how Jesus demonstrated the mighty power of God.

Jesus Spoke of the Greatness of John the Baptist

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Jesus showed the mighty power of God by raising a young man from the dead. We saw that word spread throughout Galilee, Judea and the whole surrounding region when Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain. In this topic we are going to see that the disciples of John the Baptist went to tell John about what Jesus was doing.

Luke 7:18-23 says, "Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' When the men had come to Him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' "And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'" In Luke 3:20 we saw that Herod had put John in prison.

That is why Matthew 11:2-3 says, "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" John had prepared the way for Jesus and then Herod had put him in prison. That could have been discouraging to John. As a result, when John heard from his disciples that Jesus had raised the young man, John sent two disciples with a question for Jesus. Instead of answering the question of these two disciples immediately, Jesus encouraged the two disciples of John to watch what Jesus was doing. Then we read that in the same hour Jesus performed many more miracles.

Then Jesus answered the question of the two disciples of John. Jesus told them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them." In this statement of Jesus we see the variety of miracles that Jesus did as the two disciples watched. We see that it is even possible that Jesus may have raised additional people from the dead while they were watching. In Isaiah 35, Isaiah had predicted hundreds of years earlier that the Messiah would do many of these things. As a result, Jesus told John that He was the Messiah that came to fulfill those promises that had been given by Isaiah. Jesus chose to encourage John by telling the two disciples to tell John that he would be blessed because Jesus was doing the very things John had predicted.

Luke 7:24-28 says, "When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written:

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Here we see that Jesus used this opportunity to remind the people of the message that John had preached about Jesus.

Jesus asked the multitudes six questions as He talked about John the Baptist. First, Jesus asked the people what they had gone out into the wilderness to see. When the Pharisees sent people to question John about who he was, John answered in John 1:23, "He said: 'I am 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.'" John had quoted from Isaiah 40 to describe his ministry. Now Jesus said that He was fulfilling the ministry that Isaiah had predicted for the Messiah.

Second, Jesus asked the people if they had gone out into the wilderness to see a reed shaken by the wind. Of course the answer was clear from the question. They did not go to see a reed or bush shaken by the wind but rather to see and hear the message of John. Third, Jesus asked what did you really go out to see in the wilderness. He immediately followed that question with a fourth, did you go out to see "A man clothed in soft garments?" Jesus made it very clear that they did not go to see a man that was clothed in fancy clothes and lived in a palace. In fact Matthew 3:4 says, "And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey." John certainly did not live like a king or other important person.

Then Jesus asked questions five and six, "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." Jesus said that yes it was a prophet, in fact even more than a prophet that they went to see in the wilderness. Jesus then explained the ministry of John by quoting the first part of Malachi 3:1. That verse says, "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts." Jesus did not quote the last part of that verse that day but many of the Jesus knew that promise because they were looking for the Messiah. As a result, Jesus was actually pointing to the fact that He is that promised Messiah.

Then Jesus said in Luke 7:28-35, "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We mourned to you, and you did not weep.' For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by all her children.'" Here we see that Jesus said that John was the greatest of all of the prophets.

However, what Jesus said next was a very important statement. Jesus said, "But he who is least

in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Like all of the Old Testament prophets, John was put to death before the death and resurrection of Jesus. In contrast, the person who is the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist because those in the kingdom of God have had the privilege of knowing about the death and resurrection of Jesus that took away the sin of the world. As a result, every Christian has had a greater privilege than John the Baptist. The tax collectors were very glad to hear what Jesus said because they had been baptized by John when they repented of sins.

The Pharisees and lawyers had rejected the message of John the Baptist. They did not want to believe that they needed to repent of their sins and so they rejected the message of John. This caused Jesus to say that the Pharisees and lawyers were like the children playing in the marketplace. While their parents were selling or buying at the marketplace the children would play games with each other. Sometimes the children would get angry when other children would not do what those asking them wanted them to do. Jesus said that the Pharisees and lawyers were acting just like those children.

Jesus used two sayings to describe the childish words of the Pharisees and lawyers when He said, “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We mourned to you, and you did not weep.” In Luke 3:7 we read what John had said, “Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" John warned the Jews about coming judgment. The tax collectors did express their sorrow for their sin and repented of that sin. As a result, they were baptized by John to show their repentance. The Pharisees and lawyers refused to repent of their sins because they were depending on their own works.

Jesus came and invited the tax collectors to follow Him. One tax collector that Jesus invited to follow Him was Levi (Matthew). Luke 5:29-30 says, “Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Here we see that Jesus came with great grace and love and even joined the tax collectors for a feast in the home of Levi. This time the Pharisees complained about the joy and celebration that Jesus had as He ate with sinners. Like children in the marketplace the Pharisees refused to be happy with either John or Jesus. John warned of judgment for sin and Jesus offering grace to sinners. The Pharisees rejected both messages.

Jesus then said, “But wisdom is justified by all her children.” The Pharisees depended on worldly wisdom. James 3:15 says, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” The tax collectors came with an attitude of repentance because they wanted godly wisdom. James 3:17 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the difference between worldly and godly wisdom. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this difference.

Jesus Had Dinner in the House of a Pharisee

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. Jesus had been speaking to the Pharisees and lawyers and showed them that their actions were like those of children in the marketplace because they rejected both the message of John and the message of Jesus. In our topic today we will see that Jesus was invited to have dinner at the home of a Pharisee. We will see that Jesus used this dinner to teach the Pharisees about the importance of forgiveness.

Luke 7:36-39 says, "Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.'" Jesus had just finished teaching and one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to his home for dinner.

Jesus accepted the invitation of the Pharisee and they went to his house and sat down to eat. Meanwhile a woman in that city heard that Jesus had been invited to eat dinner at the home of the Pharisee. This people of this city knew that this woman was a sinner (prostitute). This woman came to the house with a flask made of alabaster that was filled with a very good smelling oil. Alabaster was a piece of marble that they would carve into various shapes to hold expensive oil. In that culture they would lay around the table and the food would be in the center. That meant that their feet would stick out away from the table.

The woman came into the house of the Pharisee and stood at the feet of Jesus. This must have taken great courage because of her past life. Then she began to cry in true repentance for her sin. Her tears fell on the feet of Jesus. She cried so much that the feet of Jesus became wet and the woman began to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. Then she used her hair to dry the feet of Jesus. She began kissing His feet and poured the expensive oil in the alabaster bottle on the feet of Jesus.

This caused the Pharisee to start thinking evil thoughts. Luke 6:8 says, "But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood." Jesus also knew the thoughts of this Pharisee. We have seen that the Pharisees were looking for reasons to reject Jesus. This Pharisee suddenly had what he thought was a good reason to reject Jesus. He decided in his thoughts that Jesus could not be a prophet because a prophet would know the sinful lifestyle of the woman that was touching Him. The devil has three ways that he uses to tempt people. I John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world." Here we see that this Pharisee was just as guilty of sin as the woman. The only

difference was that his sin was the sin of pride that caused him to reject both Jesus and the woman who needed forgiveness.

Since Jesus knew the thoughts of the Pharisee, Luke 7:40-43 says, "And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Jesus chose to reveal the thoughts of the Pharisee named Simon by giving him an illustration and then asking him a question. The illustration was about a man who had two people who owed him money. One person owed the man five hundred days' wages and the other person owed him fifty days' wages. However, neither one of them had any money to repay the person that they owed.

The person that had these two debtors then made a choice. He made the choice to freely forgive the debt of both of the debtors. The word translated "freely forgive" is used in I Corinthians 2:12 where we read, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." Here we see that God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can know the things that have been freely given to us by God. We could do nothing in our own efforts to receive the Holy Spirit. Instead God gave us the Holy Spirit as a free gift. In the same way we see here that the person chose to freely forgive this debt.

Then Jesus asked Simon, the Pharisee, a question, "Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered that he thought that probably the one who was forgiven the most would love the most. Jesus answered Simon and told him that he was right. Then Luke 7:44-48 says, "Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Here Jesus explained some differences between the woman and Simon.

Simon had invited Jesus to his house for dinner but did not wash his feet or even give Jesus water to wash his own feet which was a common way to show respect and honor to a guest. That was considered an insult in that culture. In contrast, the woman had washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hair on her head. Simon had not given Jesus a kiss of welcome which was the common practice in that culture. In contrast, this woman had shown her love for Jesus by continually kissing His feet. It was a common courtesy to anoint the head of a visitor with oil since the person had been walking out in the sun but Simon had not shown that common courtesy. In contrast, the woman had anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil. Simon had invited Jesus to his house for a meal so that he could look for an excuse to reject Jesus. In contrast, the woman realized the greatness of her sin and came to Jesus for forgiveness.

Both Jesus and this woman knew that she had committed many sins. The woman knew that she did not deserve forgiveness. Jesus then told Simon that this woman had come with many sins. However, Jesus said that she would leave with her sins forgiven. She would leave with a great love for Jesus. I John 4:18-19 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us." The woman had recognized the love of Jesus for her and she had responded with a great love. In contrast, Simon had not even asked Jesus to forgive his sins because he thought that he was good enough to earn his way to heaven. Simon had shown by his actions that he had little love for Jesus and he did not ask for forgiveness for his sins.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said, "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus went on to explain to those at the table why the sins of this woman were forgiven. Luke 7:49-50 says, "And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." Jesus explained to the woman the reason that her sins were forgiven when He told her that your faith has saved you. The word translated "forgiven" means to let go or to send away. The woman had come to Jesus with her many sins because of her faith. Now she was able to leave with no sins on her record. They had been forgiven. They had been blotted out. They had been removed as far as the east is from the west. They had been buried in the depths of the sea. In addition, she could count on the promise that God would remember them no more. As a result, Jesus assured that woman that she could go in peace. True peace is the result of a right relationship with God.

Meanwhile, Simon and his friends who were sitting at the table with him suddenly had a new question in their minds. That question was, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" In Mark 2 Jesus also told a man that was paralyzed that his sins were forgiven. In Mark 2:7 we read, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew their thoughts as well that day. As a result, Jesus said in Mark 2:10-12, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" Jesus knew that those in the house of Simon that day also had to make a choice. They either had to recognize that Jesus is God or they had to choose to reject that fact.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that the fact that Jesus can forgive sins is due to the fact that He is God. We want them to be able to explain that people must come to Jesus and repent of their sin of unbelief. Those who place their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus as the payment for their sin will also experience forgiveness of sin and receive eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Jesus can forgive sin.

Jesus Taught the Parable of the Sower

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to clearly explain to others how they can receive forgiveness of sin and receive eternal life. Jesus continued to share that message as He traveled to various areas. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus traveled to many cities preaching the kingdom of God. We will also learn about one of the parables that Jesus taught as He spoke to a large crowd one day.

In Luke 8:1-3 we read, “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.” We saw in an earlier topic that Jesus chose the twelve to be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach. Here we see that Jesus took the twelve along with Him as He went throughout the area preaching in the various cities and villages. Jesus was showing the twelve what to share and how to share it as he shared the good news about the kingdom of God in the various cities.

We see that the kingdom of God is mentioned 71 times in the New Testament. The kingdom of God is used to speak of all those who repent of sin and come to God through Jesus today. The kingdom of God is also used to speak of the time when Jesus will rule on the earth for one thousand years as mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6. Many references talk about that future kingdom. However, Luke 17:20-21 says, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” In this verse we see that kingdom of God is within the hearts of those who truly repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in Jesus.

When Jesus was brought to Pilate before He was crucified, Pilate asked Him the question, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered that question in John 18:36-37, “Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Here we see that the kingdom of God includes all those who hear the voice of Jesus and place their faith in Him. That was the message that Jesus taught as He traveled to various cities along with the twelve.

We read that several women that had been possessed by evil spirits had been healed. Some had also been healed of various physical problems. Three women in particular are mentioned. Jesus set Mary Magdalene free by casting seven demons out of her. Joanna was the wife of the man who managed the business affairs of Herod. Susanna is also mentioned by name. In addition, we see that there were many other women whose names are not mentioned. These

women had also become disciples of Jesus and they helped Jesus in His ministry by providing the money Jesus needed for His expenses and the expenses of the twelve as they traveled from place to place.

One day a large crowd gathered to hear Jesus teach. Luke 8:4-8 says, "And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" The people had come from many different cities. Jesus often taught by a lake or on a mountain when a large crowd came to hear Him so that everyone could hear.

Jesus used a parable as He spoke to this large group of people. The word translated "parable" was used by Jesus to speak about something in daily life that everyone understood to teach something about spiritual life and often to teach an important lesson about the kingdom of God. Since they were probably on a hillside, it may be possible that they could see a person sowing his seed in a nearby field. If so, Jesus used something that they could see happening nearby at that very moment to teach an important spiritual truth. In this parable Jesus may have been pointing to a person sowing seed on a field by throwing the seed one handful at a time. In the parable the seed fell on four kinds of ground. We will see that those four kinds of ground provided the lesson that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples.

We see that some of the seed fell on the wayside. The word translated "wayside" means the path through the field or the road that was beside the field. That seed just lay on the top of the ground so the birds quickly came and ate that seed. Some of the seed fell on rocks. The rocks hold the heat of the day so that seed was the first to start to grow. However, those plants were also the first to die because they could not get water of any other form of moisture since they were on rocks. Another part of the seed fell in the places where there were also a lot of thorns or thistles. Those thorns grew much more quickly and took both the moisture in the soil and also prevented the sun from getting through to the plants that were just starting to grow. As a result, those plants also died because they could not get the things that they needed to grow.

However, when any sower sows seed, much of the seed falls on good ground when it can grow and produce a good crop for the sower. Jesus said that the seed that landed in the good ground grew and produced a crop that gave the sower a hundred heads of grain for each seed that was planted on the good ground. Then Jesus said that those who were really listening would be able to hear and understand the meaning of the parable. The crowds enjoyed hearing the story of Jesus and then they left and went their way.

Luke 8:9-15 says, "Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe

and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” To the crowds that was just an entertaining story but to the disciples Jesus taught them a very important spiritual lesson from the parable.

The disciples came to Jesus after the crowds left and asked Him what this parable meant. Before answering that question, Jesus explained why He spoke to them in parables. Jesus said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'” As the crowds heard Christ teach, they gained knowledge but they did not gain understanding. They knew the parable but they did not know what it taught. Those who are not Christians cannot understand what the Word of God teaches. I Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Then Christ explained to the disciples that the seed is the Word of God. The various kinds of soils are the hearts of the people who hear the Word of God. Those whose hearts are like the road or the side of the road are those who hear the Word of God but the devil immediately removes the Word from their hearts and those people do not give the Word any further thought. Those whose hearts are like the seed on a rock get all excited when they hear the Word of God but the Word does not take root in their lives. Such people profess to believe the Word for a little while but when temptation comes they turn away from the Word of God. Those whose hearts are like the seed that fell in the thorns are those who hear the Word but their focus is on their problems, their riches or their pleasures. Such people hear the Word of God but it never takes root in their hearts because their problems, riches or pleasures choke out the Word.

In contrast, the hearts of those who are like the good ground hear the Word of God with a heart that is open and prepared to receive the Word of God. John 8:47 says, “He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” Those who are like good ground have hearts that really hear the Word of God, place their faith in Christ and obey the Word of God. Because their hearts develop endurance they begin to bear spiritual fruit. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that as they share the Word of God, He works in the hearts and lives of people. Those who respond in their hearts will bear spiritual fruit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to bear spiritual fruit.

Jesus Taught about Family Relationships

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the hearts of people will cause them to have different responses as we share the Word of God with them. God looks on the hearts and He knows whether the heart of each person is like the hard road, the rocks, has thorns and thistles or whether the heart is like the good ground. We are to be faithful to share the Word of God with all people and God will cause our lives to bear spiritual fruit because God will cause the Word of God that we share to take root in the hearts of those who are like the good soil and their lives will bear fruit. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples in three different ways.

First, we see that Jesus taught that He is the One that is Light and gives light. Luke 8:16-18 says, "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him." In this parable we see that Jesus compares Himself to a lamp. He wants to give light to all.

In John 8:12 we read, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" Jesus had just pointed out the fact that He spoke in parables because the crowds were not seeking spiritual light. Instead they just enjoyed the entertainment that they received by listening to interesting stories or parables. Today many people have a similar attitude. Jesus is the Light. He wants all people to learn to walk in that light. As a result, Jesus does not try to hide His light in a box. He does not try to hide His light under a bed. Instead Jesus wants His Light to shine to the end of the world. He wants that light to be available to every person. However, each person must look to that Light to receive light.

Jesus and His Word reveal the secrets of the heart. This is why I Corinthians 14:24-25 say, "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you." When we share what the Word of God says, the Word reveals the secrets of the heart. Either on this earth or at the final judgment the secrets of every heart will be revealed. In addition, as we share the Word with others, God will use His Word to draw others to Jesus. That is why Jesus said that every person must pay attention to how he or she hears the Word of God. Those who hear the Word of God and obey it will be given more light so that they can grow in their understanding. In contrast, those who reject the Word of God are actually rejecting the light that would lead them to know and understand what Jesus taught. As a result, even the light that they have seemed to have will be taken from them. Jesus had just spoken about three kinds of ground that are like those who hear the Word of God but do nothing about it. We see that those whose hearts are like the road, those whose hearts are like the stony ground and those whose hearts are like the

thorny ground never bear any fruit because other things have taken away the Word of God from their thoughts and minds before it could bear fruit.

Second, we see that Jesus taught about family relationships. Luke 7:19-21 says, "Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.'" One day the mother and brothers of Jesus came to talk to Him. They could not even get into the building where Jesus was teaching because there was such a large crowd of people gathered around Jesus trying to hear Him as He taught.

Some of those close to Jesus recognized that the mother and brothers of Jesus were trying to get through the crowd to talk to Jesus. As a result, those people told Jesus that His mother and brothers were standing outside. The word translated "desiring" means to purpose or to determine. The people told Jesus that His mother and brothers were determined to see Him. Instead of stopping His teaching to go and talk to His mother and brothers, Jesus used the opportunity to teach a very important lesson.

Jesus used this opportunity to teach about the new relationship that His followers had with Him. Jesus said, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." We see that the mother of Jesus and the brothers of Jesus chose to repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus so this is not a rejection of His mother and brothers. Instead it shows that all those who follow Jesus had the blessing of becoming a part of His family. Romans 8:16-17 says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Here we see that as Christians we become joint heirs with Jesus.

However, there are two key words that we need to understand in this statement about the new relationship that the followers of Christ have with Jesus. The word translated "hear" means to hear so that so that there is understanding. We saw in the earlier verses of this chapter that Jesus spoke in parables to the crowds because there was no spiritual understanding by the crowds. The crowd just heard the interesting story about a planter sowing seed in a field. In contrast, Jesus explained to His disciples what that parable taught about the kingdom of God. The word translated "do" means to carry out the actions that Word of God teaches us to do. We can only be obedient to the Word of God as we depend on the Holy Spirit to give us His strength. True followers of Jesus will hear His Word with understanding and will carry out the actions that Jesus commands.

Those actions are summarized by three commands. In Matthew 22:37-40 we read, "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'" Then John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'" Jesus said that these three commandments summarize both the Old and New Testaments.

Third, we see that Jesus taught through the experiences of life. Luke 8:22-25 says, "Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"" Jesus chose the disciples so that they could be with Him. As they were with Him they had the opportunity to learn many lessons.

One day Jesus got into a boat with His disciples to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Since part of the disciples had been fishermen, they had spent much time on this body of water. Those disciples did not realize that Jesus was preparing to use that lake to teach them a very important lesson. The disciples did not think anything about the fact that Jesus fell asleep as they were crossing the water until there was a severe windstorm. Windstorms on the Sea of Galilee can cause large waves. That was what happened that day. The waves were so high that the boat started to fill with water. Suddenly these former fishermen went to Jesus, woke Him up and said, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" They were used to high waves but not like those waves.

Jesus just got up and spoke to the wind and the waves. He told the wind to stop and the waves to become calm. Immediately the windstorm was over and the waves became calm. Jesus then asked one question, "Where is your faith?" Mark 4:39-40 says, "Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"" The disciples suddenly realized that Jesus had total power over the wind and the waves. Here we see that the disciples were growing in their understanding of the fact that Jesus is God.

The disciples were so amazed that they said, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" Each time Jesus did a new miracle that the disciples had not seen before they learned a new thing about the greatness of Jesus. They would not have learned these lessons if they had not spent time traveling with Jesus. That same thing is true in the lives of our physical and spiritual children. It is only as they spend time with us and see how God works in our lives that they grow in their understanding of the greatness of God. Jesus chose to train the disciples by His example. In the same way we will train our children as we take them with us so that they can see the Lord work in our lives and through our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you take your children with you so that they can see how the Lord works through the experiences that you have in your life as you serve Him.

Jesus Cast Out Demons in Gadera

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how the Lord works in our lives and through our lives. This happens as we take our children with us as we serve the Lord. First, we saw that the Lord works through His Word as it is taught. Second, we saw that the Lord works in our lives as He helps us to understand the new relationship that we have with Him. Third, we saw that the Lord works in our lives as we learn how to respond to the experiences that He allows in our lives. Today we are going to see that Jesus helped the disciples learn as He worked in the life of a man that had his body possessed by many demons.

After Jesus calmed the water on the Sea of Galilee the boat with Jesus and the disciples continued to the other side of the lake and came to the area of Gadera where the Gadarenes lived. Luke 8:26-29 says, "Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness." The first person that they met when they got to the other side was a man that had been possessed with many demons for a long time.

These demons caused the man to act like he was insane. He wore no clothes. He did not live in a house. Instead he chose to live in the tombs of those who had died. In fact Mark 5:5 says, "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones." Demons are forced to recognize that Jesus is God. As a result, the man who was possessed with demons came and fell down in front of Jesus. Then a demon began to speak through the man with a loud voice. The demon said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" Here we see that the demon knew who Jesus was. He also knew that Jesus had the power to send him to judgment immediately. As a result, the demon begged not to be sent to immediate judgment. The demon said these things because Jesus had commanded the demon to come out of the man.

We also see how the demons were working to destroy the life of the man that was demon possessed. The word translated "seized" means to catch and take by force so that the person is no longer in control of himself. In order to protect themselves from this man when the demons seized him, the people of the city kept him under guard and had bound him with chains and shackles. However, the demons that had seized the man were so strong that they just broke the chains. Then the demons had driven the man out into the wilderness so that they could try and destroy him in the wilderness. That was why he wore no clothes and lived in the tombs of the dead.

Luke 8:30-34 says, "Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion,"

because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.” Here we see that Jesus then asked the demon his name.

Jesus asked the demon his name so that the disciples could gain a better understanding of demon possession. The demon said that his name was Legion because there were actually many demons in the man. The word translated “Legion” was the name that the Roman government gave to a large group of soldiers of at least 6000 men. At the time of Jesus a legion usually had 6100 foot soldiers and 726 horsemen so that it was a total of 6826 men. The name of this man helped the disciples to realize that a person could be possessed by many demons.

Then the demons began to beg Jesus not to command them to go immediately to the abyss. The word translated “abyss” means the bottomless pit where the unbelieving dead are sent today (called Hades or the place of torment in Luke 16:23). The word is used twice in Revelation 20:1-3 where we read, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.” In these verses we see that Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for the thousand years that Jesus rules on the earth. We see that the demons begged Jesus not to send them to immediate judgment.

There was a large herd of pigs feeding on the mountain near the lake. The demons begged Jesus to permit them go into the pigs rather than the abyss. Pigs were considered unclean animals by the Jews. Deuteronomy 14:8 says, “Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.” However, some Jews were very willing to herd pigs and sell them to the Romans soldiers and their families or to other Gentiles to make money. Then Jesus permitted the demons to go into the pigs when they left the man.

The demons then went out of the man and into the pigs. The man immediately saw how destructive the demons that had been in him were. Mark 5:13 says, “And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.” Those demons were so destructive that 2000 pigs committed suicide. The people that were herding the pigs saw what happened and ran for their lives. They told everyone that they met both in the country and in the city what had happened to their pigs.

Luke 8:35-40 says, “Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he

who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." Many people went out to see what had happened.

They came to Jesus and the man that had previously been demon possessed. He was a different man. We see at least three changes in his life. He was sitting at the feet of Jesus instead of crying and cutting himself. He was now clothed instead of running around naked. Most of all, he was now in his right mind instead of acting like an insane person. Jesus had earlier said in the synagogue in Nazareth In Luke 4:18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." This man had been a captive of the demons. Jesus set him free from the oppression of the demons and we see that his life was totally changed. When the people saw the changes that had happened to the man, they were filled with fear and asked Jesus and His disciples to leave.

Then Jesus and His disciples got into the boat and left. However, as they prepared to leave the man begged to go with Jesus. He just wanted to be with Jesus. Instead of agreeing to take the man with them, Jesus chose instead to tell him to go back to his own home. In fact Jesus gave him some very specific instructions. Jesus said, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." The people of that region were not ready to listen to Jesus for two reasons. First, we saw that they had been seized with a great fear. Second, they had seen their pig raising business destroyed. We might say that they were more interested in pigs (and the money that they could make from selling the pigs) than they were in people. That lack of concern was especially shown toward this man who was having his life destroyed by the demons.

The man obeyed Jesus and went and told the whole city about the great things that Jesus had done in his life. This man knew that His life had been changed. Mark 5:19-20 says, "However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled." Decapolis was the name they used for the ten cities in that area. Here we see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children apply in their own lives. We want to help our children learn to explain to others how the Lord is able to change and transform lives in any country or city. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to share how Christ transforms lives.

Jesus Healed the Daughter of Jairus

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how Jesus was even able to change and transform the life of a man that was possessed by many demons. Jesus set him free and then changed and transformed his life. His life was so changed that he went throughout the region of Decapolis (ten cities) sharing what Jesus had done for him. In our topic today we will see that Jesus changed and transformed the lives of two other people.

The people in the area of Gadera asked Jesus to leave their area because of their fear. That fear was the result of seeing the Legion of demons cast out of the man so that his life was transformed. When Jesus got back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the crowd welcomed Jesus because they had been waiting for him to return. Luke 8:40-42 says, "So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him." Here we see that there was a very different attitude toward Jesus on the two sides of the lake. One group wanted Jesus to leave and the other was glad to see Him return.

Some after Jesus returned Jairus came to Jesus with a request. We see that Jairus was the leader of the local synagogue. As a result, Jairus was respected by the people in the community. The ruler of the synagogue was the man who supervised the teaching in the synagogue and the other responsibilities of the care of the synagogue. We see that Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus and begged Jesus to come to his house. The reason why Jairus wanted Jesus to come was due to the fact his only daughter was dying. However, there were so many people crowded around Jesus as He walked toward the house of Jairus that it was almost difficult to move forward.

As Jesus was walking toward the house, we see that one of the people in that crowd was a woman with much faith. Luke 8:43-48 says, "Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." This woman realized that Jesus had the power to heal her and she thought that she would be healed if she could just touch Him.

This woman had a problem that had spiritual, financial, and physical consequences. Leviticus 15:25-27 says, "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of

her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity. Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.” Here we see that there were spiritual consequences because she was considered unclean. As an unclean person she was not allowed to enter either the synagogue or the temple. Many times such a person would even be avoided by their own family.

Second, there were financial consequences. This woman had spent all of her money going to different doctors trying to find a doctor that could treat her condition. However, none of the doctors had been able to heal her. Third, there were also physical consequences. When a person had a continual flow of blood, that person will become very weak because of the loss of blood. As a result, she had probably been physically weak for most of the twelve years that she had this problem.

This woman came up behind Jesus as He was walking slowly through the crowd and touched the border of His outer coat. She was instantly healed and the flow of blood stopped. When a person was healed by Jesus, each person was also given immediate strength. As a result, this woman knew that she had been healed. Then Jesus asked a question, “Who touched me?” Everyone standing near Jesus denied that they had touched Him. Peter spoke for the others and said, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, Who touched Me?” Peter just told Jesus that there were so many people crowding around Him that several had probably bumped against Him and may not have even realized that they had touched Him.

Jesus wanted to do more for the woman than just meet her physical need. However, the woman did not realize why Jesus said what He did. She knew that when an unclean person touched someone that the person that was touched was also considered unclean. As a result, Jesus said, “Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.” The woman was filled with fear because she realized that she could not keep her action a secret. Then the woman came with great fear and trembling and fell down before Jesus. She confessed in the presence of Jesus and all of the people that were gathered around Him the reason why she had touched Jesus. She also said that she had been healed when she touched Him. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean when she touched Him, Jesus caused her to be cleansed instead.

Jesus used the opportunity to give the woman spiritual life as well as physical healing. Jesus told the woman, “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” Here we see that she became a daughter of God. Jesus also told the woman that she could be filled with comfort and cheer. Then Jesus explained to everyone there that the faith of the woman had made her whole. The word translated “whole” is used 118 times in the New Testament and is translated “save” 93 of those times. The first use of this word in the New Testament is in Matthew 1:21 which says, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Jesus gave the woman eternal life that day so that is why He told her, “Go in peace.” Jesus gives inner peace to those who place their faith in Him.

Luke 8:49-56 says, "While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened." As Jesus was talking to the woman, someone came from the house of Jairus and told him that his daughter had died and not to bother Jesus anymore.

Jesus heard the message that was given to Jairus. Jesus immediately told Jairus, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." The word translated "well" is the same word that Jesus used when He told the crowd that the faith of the woman had made her whole. As a result, Jesus was telling Jairus to believe and both he and his daughter would be saved. Jesus only allowed Peter, James, John and the parents to go with him when He went into the house. Jesus told the crowd gathered around the house that the girl was not dead but was sleeping. Mark 5:38 says, "Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly." The crowd laughed and made fun of Jesus and said that they knew that the girl was dead. The people in this crowd were professional mourners who made extra money by going to the homes of those who died where they would wail and cry loudly to earn some extra money. Jesus told all of these people that were mourning to go out of the house.

Then Jesus took the girl by the hand and said, "Little girl, arise." The spirit of the girl came back into her and she got up immediately. Jesus then told those in the house to give the girl something to eat. Here we see that she was totally restored and Jesus knew that she was hungry. Meanwhile the parents were filled with amazement as they saw their little girl get up. The parents now had a much better understanding of who Jesus was. They had just seen that Jesus had used His power to raise their daughter from the dead.

Jesus then told her parents now to tell anyone what had happened. The crowd had shown their unbelief by the way that they had made fun of Jesus. They would certainly see the girl walking around. However, Jesus did not want them to know exactly what had happened because of their unbelief. Today many people are like that crowd. They are ready to mock and reject because of unbelief. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus chose not to let the crowd know what had happened because of their unbelief. We want them to understand that there are people just like that crowd and not to get upset when such people make fun. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to deal with the unbelief of others.