

Helping Our Children Present Jesus as the Servant Part 1

**Growing Godly Families Series
Manual 29**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

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.

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 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.” 1 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 make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Jesus Was Introduced by John the Baptist

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics that will help us to teach our physical and spiritual children about the fact that Jesus came as the Servant. These topics will be taken from the book of Mark. One of the things we want to help our children learn to explain to others is why John the Baptist came before Jesus to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus.

Mark 1:1-3 says, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’” Here we see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The word translated “gospel” means “*good news*” and is used to describe the life of Jesus. It talks especially about the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Mark wrote to help us understand the fact that Jesus came as the servant to carry out the will of the Father.

However, we begin this book by seeing that John the Baptist was sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for His coming. In these first three verses we see that John the Baptist was actually fulfilling two Old Testament prophecies about the one who would come before Jesus to prepare the people for His coming. Malachi 3:1 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.” We see that Mark began to talk about John the Baptist and his ministry by quoting the first part of this verse. Then the second verse quoted by Mark comes from Isaiah 40:3. That verse says, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

In these verses, we see that John is described two ways. First, John is described as My messenger. In the time of the Old Testament, many kings would send a messenger ahead of them to announce the coming of the king. This helped the people get ready for the coming of their king. It also gave them time to smooth out the bumps and fill in the holes so that the king could ride into their village or city on a smooth road. We will see that John was not telling the people to prepare the road. Instead, John came ahead of Jesus to tell the people to prepare their hearts.

Second, we see that John is described as a voice. John quoted the verse from Isaiah 40:3 when he described himself in John 1:23. John did not focus on his own ministry. Instead, he chose to speak about the fact that he was just a voice preparing the way for the One that would come from the Father. John had this humble attitude throughout his ministry as he introduced Jesus. In John 3:30, John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John chose to point to Jesus instead of himself.

We also see the message that John shared as he prepared the way for Jesus. Mark 1:4-5 says, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” The word translated “repentance” means “*a change of mind*.” 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Here we see that this change of mind also produces an action. There are many things that are the most important things to people in their lives. Those things have become their idols. Here we see that true repentance causes a person to turn from those things,

whatever they may be, to serve the living and true God.

The Jews would baptize Gentiles when those Gentiles became Jewish proselytes to show that they had received the true God by faith. In contrast, Mark 7:8 says, “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” Here we see that the Jews practiced many washings instead of obeying the commandments of God. That was why the message of John was so unusual. Here John called the Jews to show that they had received the true God by faith, just as the Gentiles, by the baptism of repentance. The message of John brought conviction to the hearts of many Jews and so they showed that they had come to true faith in the promises of God by the baptism of repentance.

John gave a promise with his message. The word translated “remission” is also translated by the word “forgiveness.” In Ephesians 1:7 Paul wrote, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” As a result, we see John said that those who repented of sin would receive forgiveness. The sacrifices in the Old Testament could never take away sin. Hebrews 10:4 says, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Those who had true faith in the Old Testament had their sins covered until Christ came to take those sins away. Christ used this same word when He passed the cup to the disciples and said in Matthew 26:28, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” That is why Hebrews 10:17-18 says, “Then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” Forgiveness of sins also means that they are remembered no more.

People from throughout Judea and the city of Jerusalem went to be baptized by John in the Jordan River to show their true repentance. We see that those baptized by John were confessing their sins. The word translated “confessing” means to “*agree openly*.” Those who were being baptized by John were openly agreeing that they were sinners and were repenting of their sins. The fact that the Jews normally baptized Gentiles but were not normally baptized themselves meant that they wanted everyone to know they had repented of their sins and had true faith in the One that John promised was coming.

Mark 1:6-8 goes on to say, “Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, ‘There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’” We see that the clothing of John was unusual. 2 Kings 1:8 says, “So they answered him, ‘A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.’ And he said, ‘It is Elijah the Tishbite.’” This verse shows that the clothing of John was similar to the clothing that Elijah wore and so that helped to remind the people that Elijah was to come before the Christ. John also ate whatever food was available in the wilderness.

What John said about the One that was coming after Him was a key part of his message. First, John said that the One coming after him was so great that he was not even worthy to untie His sandal strap. That particular job was normally done by a slave. By this statement, John pointed out the greatness of Jesus and showed that John had a very humble attitude of himself. Here we see that John gives us an example for our own lives. Philippians 2:3 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” This verse shows that we are to have the same humble attitude both toward the Lord and toward others.

However, the most important thing that John said was comparing the baptism of repentance

with which he was baptizing individuals with the baptism of Jesus. John said that Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. It is important to understand the difference between the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the baptism by the Holy Spirit even though both happen at the moment of salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” This verse describes the baptism by the Holy Spirit. Here we see that the Holy Spirit places us in the body of Christ. All Christians become a part of the body of Christ at the moment of salvation.

However, John promised that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Christ promised the disciples in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” Christ 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.” Then in Acts 2:4 we read, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Jews (Acts 2:4), Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45), and the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:6) all received the Holy Spirit as a group. After those initial times, Christ baptizes every person with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:9 says, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” Here we see that every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling in us because that happens at the moment of salvation.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that we are baptized with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation so that we can serve the Lord in His strength instead of having to depend on our own strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why we have been given the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Called His First Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus. John said that his baptism was a baptism of repentance; however, the One that He came to introduce would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

We see that John was a witness of the fact that Jesus was sent by God, the Father. Mark 1:9-11 says, "It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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.'" In these verses we see that Jesus had spent most of His life living in the town of Nazareth. Luke 3:23a says, "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age..." As a result, Jesus had been a carpenter for a number of years in the town of Nazareth before He began His ministry.

Jesus came to be baptized by John so that the Father could publicly identify Jesus as His Son. 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." Jesus chose to identify Himself with mankind because He came to die in our place for our sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Christ became identified with us so that He could put His righteousness to our account when we believe.

At the same time, we see that Jesus was also identified by the Father as His Son when the Father said, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Isaiah had prophesied in Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." This verse shows that the Father publicly placed the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit on Jesus as He began His public ministry. Jesus then quoted another prophecy by Isaiah from Isaiah 61:1-2a when He returned to Nazareth several months after He was baptized. Luke 4:18-21 says, "'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.'" At His baptism the Father publicly identified Jesus as His Son who would fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Him.

Mark went on to write about two key events that happened during the first year of the ministry of Jesus. Mark 1:12-15 says, "Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'" The first of these two events was the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by Satan which came immediately after His baptism.

Jesus came to completely defeat Satan. Satan had defeated Adam and Eve when he tempted

them and they sinned. As a result, 1 John 3:8 says, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Jesus began His ministry to destroy the works of the devil with His first victory over Satan before He even began His public ministry. Satan can only tempt mankind in three ways. 1 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.” Eve was tempted in all three areas when she “...saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree that was desirable to make one wise...” (Genesis 3:6) Satan tried to tempt Jesus in the same three ways but each time Jesus defeated Satan by answering Him with Scripture.

The second event that happened in these verses happened several months later. The events recorded in at least the first four chapters of John happened before this second event. John 4:1-3 says, “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.” Mark 1:14 says, “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” John was still baptizing in the events mentioned in John 4 so he had not yet been cast into prison. We see that when Jesus came into Galilee that He was preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand. As a result, the message of Jesus was, “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” Just like John, Jesus focused on the importance of repentance.

Mark 1:16-20 goes on to say, “And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”

This event happened almost a year after Jesus had been baptized by John. John the Baptist had originally introduced part of these men to Jesus after Jesus had been tested in the wilderness by Satan. John 1:32-34 says, “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.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.’” John the Baptist told his followers about Jesus by calling Him the Lamb of God.

Then John 1:35-40 says, “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ They said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which is to say, when translated, “Teacher”), ‘where are You staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.” Six men (Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip and Nathanael) all met Jesus in the next two days and were invited to “Come and See.” These men then went with Jesus to the wedding in Cana, spent time with Him in Capernaum, traveled with Him to the Passover in Jerusalem and later spent time with Jesus in Judea before returning to Galilee through Samaria.

That is why the events recorded in Mark 1:16-20 occurred nearly a year after Jesus met these men and said “Come and See.” Matthew 4:12-13 says, “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in

Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.” We see that Jesus came to Capernaum after He had been rejected by the people of His hometown of Nazareth. Luke 4:28-31 says, “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. Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths.” This meant Jesus then moved to the area where these men lived.

During this time, these men had the opportunity to get better acquainted with Jesus and even travel with Him to a variety of places. As a result, this invitation by Jesus is an invitation to come and grow and includes a promise that these men would learn how to serve God. Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) These men had been fishers of fish. They understood what it meant to catch fish. Now Jesus promised them that their lives would be transformed and they would become fishers of men. Acts 4:13 describes how their lives were changed as they learned to become fishers of men and learned the importance of yielding to the Holy Spirit so that the power of the Holy Spirit could flow through their lives. That verse says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The Lord will transform our lives as we learn these same things.

We see that when Jesus called these two sets of brothers to become His disciples that all four of these men immediately left their nets and followed Jesus. The word translated “left or forsook” means “*to leave, to forgive or to let go.*” These men were willing to let go of their fishing and accept the invitation to learn how to serve Jesus. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make the choice to let go of the things of this world and make it their first priority to use their lives to serve Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children what this means by your example.

3.

Jesus Healed Many People in Capernaum

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to let go of the things of this world and make it their priority to use their lives to serve Christ. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus went with Peter and Andrew to their home and that Jesus then used their home as a place to minister to many people in the city of Capernaum.

Mark 1:21-22 says, “Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” These verses make it clear that the teaching of Jesus was very different from the teaching of the scribes. The teaching of the scribes involved quoting what earlier Rabbis had said about the Old Testament. By this form of teaching, the scribes were just passing on the opinions of others. In contrast, we see that Jesus taught as One having authority. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Jesus could teach as One having authority because He has that authority. Jesus went on to say in Matthew 28:19-20, “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.” Here we see that Jesus commanded us to make disciples by teaching all who come to Him for salvation how to obey all that Jesus commanded.

Christ also promised that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher. 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.” The New Testament writers wrote down all of the things that Christ taught that the Father wanted to be taught to each of us who become Christians. Then 1 Corinthians 2:13 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.” We are not to be like the scribes and teach our own opinions or the opinions of others. Instead, we are to pray for spiritual understanding so that we can teach and answer questions by sharing the Word of God and explaining it within its context. Psalm 119:18 says, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.” The Holy Spirit is the One who opens our spiritual eyes.

While Jesus was in the synagogue, Mark 1:23-28 says, “Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 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 unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’ And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.” The word translated “unclean” means “*not cleansed or foul*” and in the Gospels was always used to speak of demons.

The demons in this man were forced to recognize that Jesus is the Holy One of God and so their fear was that they would be sent to immediate judgment. Jesus then showed that He has all authority over all things including demons. Jesus just spoke to the demon and said, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” The demon had to obey and made one last effort to destroy the man as he came out of him. We do not need to fear demons because 1 John 4:4 promises us, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he

who is in the world.” Demons cannot come into us if we are true Christians because we have the Holy Spirit living within us.

The people in the synagogue were amazed as they heard what Jesus said and saw what happened in the life of the man as the demon came out of him. The people in the synagogue that day talked among themselves and said, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” (Mark 1:27) The people realized that they had seen something very amazing that day. As a result, they could not keep quiet about what they had heard and seen. People talked about what had happened everywhere they went. This caused the fame of Jesus to spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.

Mark 1:29-31 goes on to say, “Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.” We see in these verses that when Jesus left the synagogue that He and His disciples went to the house of Peter and Andrew. The family immediately told Jesus that the mother of the wife of Peter was sick with a fever. In fact Luke 4:38-39 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.” Here we see that the fever was a high fever.

Jesus just walked over to the mother-in-law of Peter and rebuked the fever and then took her by the hand and lifted her up. Usually, when a person has a high fever, the person is very weak for several hours even after the fever has departed from that person. In contrast, we see that in addition to healing her of the fever that Jesus also restored her strength. That is shown by the fact that she immediately began to serve Jesus and His disciples. This is a reminder that when Jesus healed, the healing was complete.

We see that everyone in Capernaum and the surrounding area heard about the fact that Jesus had cast the demon out of the man in the synagogue. As a result, we see that many people in Capernaum came to the house of Peter and Andrew that evening. Mark 1:32-34 says, “At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.” The reason why the people waited until after the sun had set was due to the fact that this miracle had happened on the Sabbath day. The Jews measured their days from sundown to sundown. This meant that the Sabbath began at sundown on Friday and ended at sundown on Saturday so the people came after sundown.

We see that the whole city gathered together in and around the house of Peter and Andrew. The people had been astonished at the teaching of Jesus and then amazed when Jesus cast out the demon. The word translated “astonished” means “*to be astonished or amazed*” while the word translated “amazed” means “*to be frightened or amazed*.” This second word is used in Acts 9:6 where we read, “So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’” In this verse, we see that there was a mixture of fear and amazement. That is probably what had happened in the synagogue that day as well as Jesus both taught and cast out the demon.

The people had heard about the healing of the mother-in-law of Peter and so they brought all those who were sick. Many had either heard or seen Jesus cast out the demon in the synagogue and so they also brought to Jesus all those who were demon-possessed. We read that Jesus

healed many with various diseases. The word translated “diseases” can be translated either “sickness” or “disease.” Matthew 4:23-24 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.” In these two verses, the word is translated “sickness” in verse 23 and “disease” in verse 24.

We also see that Jesus cast out many demons. The word translated “demons” means “*spirits that are inferior to God.*” Revelation 12:3-4 says, “And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.” Thirteen times in the book of Revelation we see that Satan is called the dragon. In verse four, we see that the tail of Satan drew one-third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. This refers to the angels that followed Satan when he rebelled against God. As a result, these became known as fallen angels, evil spirits or demons. In Mark, we see that Jesus has all power over demons. He has the power to cast them out. They were also forced to obey Jesus when He commanded them not to speak.

We learn some key lessons in these verses. We see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to answer questions by praying and asking the Lord for guidance and then answering those questions from the Word of God instead of from their own opinions. We also see that Jesus is the One who has the power and authority to cast out demons so we need to help our children learn to pray that Christ will defeat the power of Satan. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to answer questions Biblically and depend on Christ to defeat Satan.

4.

Jesus Preached in the Next Towns

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to answer questions from the Word of God instead of their own opinions. We also saw that we want to help them understand that Jesus has all power over every demon. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus began to give His disciples a vision for the people in other areas in addition to their own town.

Jesus had spent a busy Sabbath ministering to the people of Capernaum. However, that did not hinder Jesus from spending time with His Father. Mark 1:35-37 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. And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’” Here we see that Jesus got up long before daylight. Jesus gave each of us an example of the importance of fellowship with the Father. In 1 John 1:3 we read, “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.” Jesus wanted that fellowship with the Father even if it meant getting up long before daylight.

Jesus also gave us an example of taking time to be alone with the Lord as we spend time in fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Jesus gave an interesting illustration of this in what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:5-6 says, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” In the time of Jesus many of the religious leaders prayed in public places so that they would be seen by the people. Jesus said that those who chose to do that did so because they were hypocrites. They prayed to be seen by men and not to enjoy fellowship with the Father. To really enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son, we need to regularly spend time with the Lord alone.

Jesus was praying in a solitary place when Peter and those with him found Jesus. Peter and the others had a message to give to Jesus. They said, “Everyone is looking for You.” The people had seen the miracles that Jesus did and many were probably looking for more miracles. A statement that Jesus made later about Capernaum shows that most of the people in that city did not truly turn to Jesus. Matthew 11:23-24 says, “‘And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.’” Jesus knew the hearts of the people and He knew that many were just looking for Him because they wanted to see more miracles.

Mark 1:38-39 goes on to 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.” Instead of returning to Capernaum where the people were excited about the miracles, Jesus told these disciples that it was more important for Him to carry out the purpose that the Father had for Him. Jesus had just promised these disciples that He would equip them to become fishers of men. In order to become fishers of men the disciples needed to learn what to preach. As a result, Jesus said,

“Let us go into the next towns.” In each town that Jesus and the disciples visited the disciples were going to hear what to preach and what Old Testament passages Jesus used as He preached.

The area of Galilee had 203 cities and towns. Each of these cities and towns had a synagogue so that meant that Jesus would be sharing His message in many different places. The trip to visit many of these towns may have taken several months and the disciples heard Jesus preach many times. Matthew 4:23-24 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.” The disciples were being shown what to preach as they heard Jesus preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Jesus also healed all kinds of sickness and disease. In addition, He healed many who were demon possessed. Later the apostles were given similar signs to verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus. 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?” Here we see that God gave the apostles special signs and gifts to verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We read more about one of the miracles that Jesus did in Mark 1:40-45 where we read, “Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, ‘If You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.” We see the reason why this particular miracle was mentioned in three of the Gospels.

The last recorded leper healed in the Old Testament was in 2 Kings 5. Naaman, the Syrian, had been healed about eight hundred years earlier through the ministry of Elisha, the prophet. Jesus spoke about that miracle in the synagogue in Nazareth when He said in Luke 4:27-29 which says, “‘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.” The people of Nazareth became so angry that they tried to push Jesus off a cliff to kill Him.

This leper recognized that Jesus was a great prophet because of the miracles that He was doing. As a result, He came and knelt down to Jesus and begged Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” No one wanted to touch a leper for fear of catching leprosy themselves. In contrast, Jesus had compassion for this man and reached out and touched the man. Then Jesus said, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Instead of Jesus getting leprosy when He touched the man, the man was healed. The leprosy was immediately cleansed. Then Jesus gave this man some very important instructions.

Jesus told the man not to tell anyone. Instead, Jesus told the man to go and show himself to the

priest. Jesus told the man to then offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded. That command is given in Leviticus 14:2-7. Those verses say, “This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.”

Jesus also told the man why he was to do this. Jesus said that he was to do this as a testimony to the priests. The priests had not pronounced Naaman clean since he was a Gentile. As a result, even though instructions were given telling the priests what to do to pronounce a leper clean, the priests had never done this. That was why Jesus wanted this miracle to be a testimony to the priests. However, this leper did not follow the instructions that Jesus had given to him. Instead of going to the priests, the leper just talked about what Jesus had done to everyone that he met. This prevented the testimony to the priests which would have forced them to publicly declare that the man had been cleansed of leprosy when Jesus touched him.

This created a problem for Jesus because people just started coming from everywhere to see Jesus do more miracles. As a result, Jesus was not able to go into the city because such large crowds started coming to Him. However, most of them were coming to Him for the wrong reason. They wanted to see Jesus do more miracles instead of coming to hear the message that Jesus was preaching. This made it necessary for Jesus to be out in the deserted places. However, even in the deserted places, the crowds came to Him from every direction. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why Jesus told this man to go and show himself to the priests as a testimony to the priests. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the importance of this miracle.

5.

Jesus Healed a Paralyzed Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus took the disciples with Him on a tour throughout the cities of Galilee. We also saw why Jesus told the man cleansed of leprosy to go and show himself to the priests as a testimony to them. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened when Jesus returned to Capernaum.

Jesus had been preaching throughout the cities of Galilee but then returned to Capernaum. Jesus had been at the house of Peter and Andrew before He began this tour through Galilee. The two brothers had traveled with Jesus thorough Galilee along with some of the other disciples. As a result, this was probably the house to which Jesus came when He returned to Galilee. Mark 2:1-4 says, “And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. 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. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.” Here we see that the people quickly found out that Jesus had returned to Capernaum and immediately started coming to see Him.

The crowd became so large that soon the house was filled with people. Others stood near the door so that they could hear what Jesus was saying even if they could not see Him. Jesus immediately began preaching the Word to the crowd of people that had gathered. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” However, as the crowd continued to grow, those people who were still coming could not even get near the door of the house. It was about that time that four men arrived. They were carrying their paralyzed friend to Jesus so that Jesus could heal him. However, they could not even get close to the door of the house because of the large crowd that was gathered around the door.

That did not stop the four friends. The Jewish homes usually had a flat roof with the stairs to the roof on the outside of the house. Deuteronomy 22:8 says, “When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.” The word translated “parapet” was the name for the low wall that was built on the sides of a roof or a bridge. When the weather was hot, the people would go up on the roof when the cooler evening breeze began to blow. Many of the people would even sleep on the roof during hot weather. These four friends carried their friend up on the roof of the house. Luke 5:19 says, “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.” We see that these four men worked together and they were determined to get their friend to Jesus.

Mark 2:5-9 says, “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’” We do not read about the faith of the paralyzed man. However, we do read about the faith of the four friends. Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven

you.”

Immediately, the scribes who were there began reasoning in their hearts. The word translated “reasoning” means “*to bring together different thoughts or to deliberate.*” Here we see that they were bringing together different thoughts in their hearts rather than in their minds. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” One of the parts of the human spirit is the conscience. The scribes showed by the thoughts of their hearts that they were not true followers of God. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” After seeing and hearing about all of the miracles that Jesus did as signs during the previous few months, these scribes were showing the same rebellion toward God in their hearts that had been shown in the days of Noah because they refused to recognize Jesus as God.

In the reasoning in their hearts they were thinking, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus immediately perceived in His spirit what the scribes were reasoning within themselves. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 we read, “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” Mankind cannot perceive the thoughts of the heart of another person because we cannot look on the heart. In contrast, this very statement showed that Jesus is God because He could perceive the thoughts that were going on in the hearts of the scribes.

Jesus then showed that He knew the thoughts of the hearts of the scribes by asking them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’” We see that Jesus told the scribes that He knew the thoughts of their hearts. Jesus then went on to point out the fact that He had the power to heal the paralyzed man just by speaking the word. Jesus pointed out that He could speak two very different statements but that both statements would have the same result. Jesus told the scribes that He could say, “Your sins are forgiven you.” Jesus said that He could get the same result by saying, “Arise, take up your bed and walk.” Here we see that Jesus said that He had the authority to forgive sins. The fact that Jesus knew the thoughts of their hearts made it clear that He came from God.

As a result, Jesus went on to say 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!’” A key name that Jesus used for Himself as He made this statement should have been a clear statement to the scribes because they were the ones who made copies of the books of the Old Testament.

Daniel 7:13-14 says, “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.” This statement from the book of Daniel made it clear that the Son of Man would have an eternal kingdom. As a result, the statement of Jesus showed He is God. This made it clear that Jesus did have power on earth to forgive sins.

Then Jesus spoke to the paralyzed man and said, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” The man immediately obeyed Jesus, got up, picked up the bed on which he had

been carried and went to his own home. Luke tells us that this man had also come to a true faith in Jesus. Luke 5:25 says, "Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." We see several things in this verse. The man got up while the crowd was watching him. Probably at least part of the people there that day had known this man. They knew that he was paralyzed and now they saw him get up from his bed.

We also see that he took up what he had been lying on. This is a reminder that this man had been given physical strength in addition to being healed. He was able to carry home the bed or mat on which he had been lying. However, the most important thing that we see that happened in his life that day was the fact that his heart had been changed. He knew that his sins had been forgiven because of the first statement that Jesus had made. However, we also see that there was a real change of heart. The man was giving glory to God for what had just happened in His life. Then he walked out of the house as everyone watched.

This changed man also had an impact on many of the people that were gathered at that house that day. We see that all of the people who saw what happened began to give glory to God. They also said, "We never saw anything like this!" Many of these people had probably seen Jesus heal various people. However, this was the first time that they heard Jesus also forgive sins. The need for the forgiveness of sins is the greatest need of every person in the world. In Acts 26:18 Paul explained why Jesus had sent him to the Gentiles when he wrote, "To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Then Ephesians 1:7 adds, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Christ made this forgiveness of sins possible by paying the penalty for sins on the cross. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others how others can also receive this forgiveness of sins that the paralyzed man received that day. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this forgiveness to others.

Jesus Invited Matthew to Follow Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus told a man that his sins were forgiven when Jesus saw the faith of the four friends. We also saw why Jesus first told the man that his sins were forgiven instead of telling him to rise up and walk. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened when Jesus invited Matthew to follow Him.

In Mark 2:13-14 we read, “Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.” Jesus had just healed the paralyzed man. Here we see that Jesus left the house and went to the Sea of Galilee. Jesus then taught the people by the sea. When He finished teaching, He passed the place where Levi (Matthew) was sitting at the tax office to collect taxes. Tax collectors were hated by the Jewish people because they paid the Roman government to buy the right to collect taxes in a certain area. As a result, the people considered them traitors. In addition, they would then charge the people more than Rome required and would keep the extra money for themselves. This caused the people to also consider them crooks who were stealing from their own people.

Jesus knew how the people felt about tax collectors. However, Jesus loved the tax collectors just as much as He loved the rest of the people. Jesus immediately gave Matthew an invitation. Jesus just said, “Follow Me.” Luke 5:28 says, “So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.” This verse makes it clear that Matthew made a life-changing decision that day. Matthew made the choice to leave everything including his tax collecting business and follow Jesus. This shows that the invitation caused a change of heart that also resulted in a change of actions.

What happened next tells us that Matthew had an immediate concern for his friends and co-workers. Mark 2:15-17 says, “Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi’s* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” Matthew knew how to introduce the other tax collectors and sinners to Jesus.

Luke 5:29 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.” Here we see that Matthew gave a great feast in honor of Jesus and invited all of his co-workers and all of his friends that were called sinners by the Pharisees over to his home for dinner. The Pharisees called people sinners if they were tax collectors or committed certain sins that the Pharisees thought were bad sins. We see that many tax collectors and sinners came to that dinner. They sat down to eat with Jesus and His disciples because they felt accepted by Jesus. That was in direct contrast to the way they felt around scribes and Pharisees. As a result, we see that many tax collectors and sinners accepted the invitation of Matthew to eat with Jesus and have the opportunity to get acquainted with Him. In fact, we read that many of these tax collectors and sinners followed Jesus as a result.

The scribes and Pharisees were very upset when they saw that Jesus was eating with the tax collectors and sinners. Toward the end of the ministry of Jesus we see that same attitude by the scribes and Pharisees in Luke 15:1-2 where we read, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners

drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” In that chapter, we see that Jesus gave three parables because of the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees: the parable of the lost sheep; the parable of the lost coin; and the parable of the lost sons.

In the parable of the lost sons, we see that the father was rejoicing and celebrating because the son known as the prodigal son had repented and returned home. However, the older son was just as lost but he did not know that he was lost. Luke 15:28-30 says, “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’” We never read that this older son went into the celebration. In fact, he was very angry because the father was celebrating. This older son showed the same attitudes that the scribes and Pharisees showed in their rejection of tax collectors and sinners. We also see that most of them never repented and as a result they did not receive eternal life.

The scribes and Pharisees were so upset to see Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners that they asked the disciples of Jesus, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus heard their question and He answered instead of forcing the disciples to try and figure out a way to answer the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples had not yet learned how to answer the questions of the scribes and Pharisees when they tried to trap Jesus or the disciples with their questions. As a result, Jesus chose to answer this question. Just a short time later the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus again. Mark 2:24 says, “And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” In this verse, we see that the Pharisees made the traditions of the Rabbis equal with the Old Testament so they were the ones that were guilty of sin.

Jesus explained the purpose of His coming in the answer that He gave to the scribes and Pharisees. These two groups thought that they were righteous because they kept the traditions of the Rabbis. Jesus later described the inner character of the scribes and Pharisees when He said in Matthew 23:28, “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Jesus used an illustration to show His purpose when He said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” The tax collectors and sinners knew that they were sinners because the Pharisees continually reminded them of that fact. They were ready to listen to Jesus and repent because they wanted to have their sins forgiven. By His answer to this question, Jesus made it clear that those who were sinners could have their sins forgiven when they came to Him in true repentance for their sin. That offered great hope to the tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus was soon asked another question. Mark 2:18-20 says, “The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.’” John had made it clear that he was not the bridegroom when he answered a question with the words given in John 3:27-29, “John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is

fulfilled.” John’s own answer earlier had made his ministry clear.

Jesus made it clear to both the disciples of John and to the Pharisees that He is the One who fulfilled the words spoken by John. Jesus made it very clear that His disciples would not fast as long as Jesus was with them. They had the great privilege of being the friends of the bridegroom and the bridegroom was with them. The disciples of John may have understood what Jesus meant because of what John had said during the time that he was introducing Jesus. However, the Pharisees could not understand because they were totally lacking in spiritual insight. 1 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.” The Pharisees had a complete lack of spiritual understanding.

Jesus went on to explain that the day would come when His disciples would fast. However, they would not fast for the same reason as the Pharisees. Matthew 6:5 says, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Then Matthew 23:2-5 adds, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.” They did what they did to be seen by men. In contrast, the disciples of Jesus made it their goal to faithfully serve the Lord. In Acts 6:4 they said, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” They fasted as they prayed so that they could be led by the Lord. In the same way, we want to give an example to our physical and spiritual children of doing whatever we do, including fasting, to please and serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to do what they do to be faithful as they serve the Lord.

Jesus Came to Bring New Life

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the lack of spiritual understanding by the scribes and Pharisees. We saw that they lacked spiritual understanding because they lacked spiritual life. The same thing is true today. If a person does not have spiritual life, that person will not have spiritual understanding. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus came to give new life and not to patch up the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees.

The scribes and the Pharisees spent their time teaching the traditions of their fathers instead of teaching the people how to understand and apply the Word of God to their daily lives. Mark 7:6-8 says, “He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’” In the previous verses, the Pharisees had just asked Jesus a question about fasting. We saw in the last topic that they had a wrong purpose for fasting.

That is why Jesus went on to give two illustrations. Mark 2:21-22 says, “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.” First, we see that Jesus used an illustration of fixing a hole in an old piece of clothing. In the New Testament times a new piece of clothing would shrink when it was washed because all material in that day would shrink when it was new. In contrast, an old piece of clothing had already done its shrinking and did not continue to shrink. However, a new piece of cloth would shrink if it was used to patch the old piece of clothing. That would cause a larger tear in the old clothing.

The second illustration was similar. New wineskins will stretch when the juice from grapes that was placed in the wineskins begins to expand as it turns to wine. In contrast, old wineskins have lost their ability to stretch and cannot expand when the juice begins to turn to wine. As a result, the wineskins will break instead and everything in the wineskin will be spilled on the ground. Jesus used these two illustrations to show that he did not come to try and patch the religion of the scribes and Pharisees because they had developed a religion based on the traditions handed down from the fathers and did not teach true faith in God. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” This verse made it very clear to the Pharisees that their religion based on keeping the traditions and rules of the fathers could not save. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Works cannot save and any religion based on works is only a doorway to hell.

The scribes and Pharisees were not happy with the things that Jesus taught. They began to look for every excuse to criticize and condemn Jesus. Mark 2:23-24 says, “Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” As a result, the Pharisees watched Jesus and His disciples as they walked on a path through the grainfields on their way to the synagogue. The disciples were hungry and began to break off heads of grain so that they could eat the grain. This was in agreement with the Old

Testament. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 says, “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. 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 they could pick and eat grapes or heads of wheat to satisfy their hunger. However, they were not to pick for the purpose of selling some of the crop to others.

As a result, the disciples were not breaking the Old Testament law. Instead they were breaking a tradition of the Rabbis. Luke 6:1 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.” The tradition of the Rabbis taught that rubbing the grain in the hands was a form of threshing and so the Pharisees taught that such work was forbidden on the Sabbath. For the Pharisees to tell Jesus that His disciples were doing something that was not lawful on the Sabbath meant that these Pharisees felt that their traditions were of equal authority with the Word of God. Many religions and even churches make this same error today because they feel that their traditions are just as important as the Word of God. Such teaching is false teaching.

Jesus chose to show that such teaching about tradition is false teaching by answering the Pharisees with an illustration from the Old Testament. Mark 2:25-28 says, “But He said to them, “‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’” And He said to them, “‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” Jesus here gave an illustration that the best way to answer false teaching is to answer such teaching from the Word of God.

Jesus took His illustration from 1 Samuel 21:1-6. In 1 Samuel 21:3-5 we read, “‘Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves* of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.’” 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.’” Then David answered the priest, and said to him, ‘Truly, women *have been* kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day.’” These verses show that the need was that the young men with David were hungry. The priest said that he did not have any common bread because the only bread that he had was the loaves that had been on the table of showbread.

The table of showbread had twelve loaves of bread placed on it. Those loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Each week the twelve loaves were replaced with twelve new loaves of fresh bread. As a result, the only bread that the priest had at the time David came to him was the twelve loaves that had just been taken off the table of showbread. That bread was considered holy bread because it had been on the table of showbread. Normally, the holy bread was only eaten by the priests. Leviticus 24:8-9 says, “Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” The priest gave this bread to David for his men. The Bible does not condemn the action of the priest because God used his actions to meet a need when David and the men with him were very hungry.

Then Jesus explained the purpose of the Sabbath to the Pharisees. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was

made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Here we see that God set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest because He knew that mankind would need a day of rest. Genesis 2:2 says, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” God did not need to rest but He rested as an example for us because He knew that we would need a day of rest.

However, we see that God had an even greater rest planned than the Sabbath. Hebrews 4:9-11 says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” Only true believers who are the people of God are able to enter into this greater rest. Our salvation is not based on anything we did to earn our salvation. Instead, our salvation is totally the result of the work of Christ for us on the cross. As Christ hung on the cross, He cried out, “It is finished,” and the payment for our salvation was complete. Because we have entered into that rest, Hebrews 4:16 tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We have rest because we have peace with God through Christ.

Jesus told the Pharisees one other thing that day as He spoke to them. Mark 2:28 says, “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” That title “Son of Man” was very important because of what Jesus had said earlier to some of these same Pharisees. Mark 2:10-11 says, “‘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.’” Jesus had shown that He is the Son of Man and He is God who has the power to forgive sins. Here Jesus said that as the Son of Man, He is also the Lord of the Sabbath. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain the fact that Jesus is the Son of Man who is God. He is the One who makes it possible for us to come to the Father with boldness. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this key fact to others.

Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath because He is the Son of God. He is the One who made it possible for us to enter into rest because He finished the work of paying the penalty for our sins on the cross. In this topic, we will see that Jesus further angered the Pharisees by healing a man on the Sabbath.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees were looking for an excuse to accuse Him of sin. Mark 3:1-4 says, “And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ 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.” When Jesus entered the synagogue He saw that there was a man there with a withered hand. A withered hand is one that never grew properly so the arm and hand was much smaller than the other hand.

Luke 6:6 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.” Luke mentioned two things that Mark did not mention. First, this happened on a different Sabbath. Second, it was the right hand of the man that was withered. This meant that the man was forced to do everything with his left hand. However, the Pharisees had no concern for the man. They were only looking for a way to trap Jesus.

As a result, the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. They wanted to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath day. They thought that if Jesus healed the man that would give them an excuse to accuse Jesus of sin. Jesus had the man stand so that everyone would be able to see what happened to the man. Then Jesus asked the Pharisees a question. The question began, “Is it lawful?” By that one statement Jesus forced the Pharisees to base any charges that they might try to make on the Old Testament law instead of the traditions of the Rabbis. Then the rest of the question forced the Pharisees to think about what the Ten Commandments said. Immediately, the rest of the question forced them to think about two specific commandments.

Exodus 20:8-10 says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.” Then Exodus 20:13 says, “You shall not murder.” The Word of God explained exactly what it meant to work on the Sabbath. They were not to work on the Sabbath. However, the law did not forbid doing good on the Sabbath. Second, Jesus asked if it was right to save life or to kill. Since the commandment said not to murder it did not forbid saving life. Later, Jesus said to a ruler of a different synagogue in Luke 13:15, “The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?” Jesus made it very clear that even the religious leaders showed kindness to their animals on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees did not answer the question of Jesus because they knew Jesus was right. Mark 3:5-6 says, “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. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with

the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.” Here Jesus showed the difference between godly anger and worldly anger. Jesus was angry at sin but He loved the sinners who committed that sin so much that He died for them. In contrast, much of the anger in the world is worldly anger. That is when people are angry at the sinner instead of their sin.

Jesus was grieved because He had a great love for every one of the Pharisees. At the same time He was angry at the hardness of their hearts. The hardness of their hearts was due to their inner rebellion. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The Pharisees had an evil heart of unbelief that was causing them to depart from the living God. The result was that their hearts had become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Jesus turned to the man with the withered hand and said, “Stretch out your hand.” The word “restore” means “*to be restored to its former state.*” The word “whole” means the hand would be restored to health and strength. The man did stretch out his hand and it increased in length and became normal just like his left hand. Matthew 12:13 says, “Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched *it* out, and it was restored as whole as the other.”

This caused an immediate reaction among the Pharisees. Luke 6:11 says, “But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.” This rage caused the Pharisees to leave the synagogue and go find the Herodians. The Pharisees were religious leaders and taught the traditions of the fathers. In contrast, the Herodians were a political group and thought that they could change things by working with the Roman government. Normally, these two groups were opposed to each other. Here we see that quickly changed. We will see that these two groups began to plot together how they could destroy Jesus. Both groups were opposed to Jesus because the Pharisees were afraid of losing their religious power and the Herodians were afraid of losing their political power. Both groups were controlled by hardened hearts.

Jesus knew what was going on in the hearts of the Pharisees as they left the synagogue. Mark 3:7-12 says, “But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.” We see that Jesus then left the synagogue and went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The very thing the Pharisees feared happened as great crowds of people from throughout the region followed Jesus because they heard what He was doing.

Jesus saw the large crowds and realized that many of the people would try to get closer to Him. As a result, He told the disciples to have a small boat ready so that He could get into the boat if the crowds began pushing to get closer to Him. Jesus knew that such pushing could crush either He or others. Jesus had found it necessary to do that at an earlier time because the people had pushed closer to try and hear Jesus as He spoke. Luke 5:3 says, “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 crowd also had other reasons why they wanted to get close to Jesus. Jesus had healed many people over the previous months. Other people heard about those who had been healed.

The word translated “afflictions” means “*a scourging, a plague or any misfortune or calamity that had affected a person.*” As a result, this included people with many types of painful diseases and physical ailments. These people with various painful physical problems were all trying to get close to Jesus so that they could touch Him and be healed. Jesus healed many people but He also wanted to teach the people so that was why He told the disciples to have a small boat ready for use if necessary.

Jesus also healed people who were possessed with demons. The demons that possessed these people were forced to recognize that Jesus is God. Mark 3:11 says, “And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’” Here we see that the people that were possessed with demons would fall down in front of Jesus. Then the demons would speak through the person and cry out, “You are the Son of God.” At the very time that the Pharisees and Herodians were plotting against Jesus, the demons were being forced to recognize that Jesus is God.

However, Jesus did not need the testimony of demons to prove that He is God. That was why Jesus sternly warned the demons not to make Him known. The word translated “sternly warned” means “*to rebuke, to admonish or to charge sharply.*” John 5:33-47 gives us four witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Those included: the witness of John the Baptist; the witness of Jesus’ works; the witness of the Father and the witness of the Old Testament. John 5:39-41 says, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. I do not receive honor from men.” Since Jesus did not depend on the witness of men, He certainly did not want the witness of demons.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why Jesus chose to do good on the Sabbath even though He knew that it would cause the Pharisees to begin to plot His death. We see that Jesus was carrying out the will of the Father and by doing that caused the Pharisees to begin to plot His death. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Jesus did what He did.

Jesus Chose the Twelve Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus chose to heal on the Sabbath even though He knew that the Pharisees would begin to plot His death as a result. In our topic today, we are going to see why Jesus chose the twelve to be with Him.

In our last topic, we learned several things about two groups of people that were around Jesus. One group was composed of the Pharisees and Herodians who wanted to destroy Jesus because they saw Jesus as a threat to their religious or political power. The second group was the large multitudes of people. Many in this group came to be healed or bring family members to be healed. Others were just curious to hear what Jesus was teaching. There was also a third group following Jesus and that was His disciples. In our topic today, we are going to see why Jesus chose twelve of these disciples to be a smaller group of disciples. Mark 3:13-15 says, "And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 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." Here we see that Jesus called the men that He wanted to be in this smaller group of disciples.

We read that Jesus went up on the mountain and called to Him those that He wanted. Luke 6:12-13 gives us a little more detail about what happened that day. Those verses say, "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." In these verses we see that Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before selecting the twelve. Jesus gave us a very important lesson about how to select people for leadership development. We need to pray that the Lord will give us wisdom about whom to choose so that we are working with the people with whom the Father wants us to work. Jesus chose this twelve from a larger group because it says that from among His disciples He chose these twelve.

It was only after praying all night that Jesus called to Himself those that He wanted. Later Jesus told them in John 15:16, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." Jesus chose the twelve so that they could bear fruit that remains. Here in Mark we see several reasons why Jesus chose the twelve so that their fruit would remain.

First, Jesus chose the twelve that they might be with Him. Christ explained why it was so important for these men to be with Him in Luke 6:40 where we read, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." The word translated "perfectly trained" means "*to make complete, to equip or make one what he ought to be.*" This word is used in Hebrews 13:20-21 where we read, "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." In these verses, the word is translated "make you complete". Jesus wanted the twelve to learn by example how to become complete so that they could do Christ's work and carry out the will of the Father. We are to make disciples by taking others with us so that the same thing can happen.

Second, Jesus chose the twelve that He might send them forth to preach. The disciples would learn what to preach by the things that they heard Jesus preach as they went with Him. Matthew 4:23 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Jesus showed the disciples what to preach and teach and showed them how to preach and teach.

Third, Jesus chose the twelve to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. We saw in Luke 6:13 a few paragraphs earlier that these particular twelve disciples were also called apostles. The word “disciple” means “*a learner or one who is taught by another.*” The word “apostle” means “*one who is sent forth with orders or a qualified representative.*” We see that the apostles would later verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus by having power to heal sicknesses and 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?” God confirmed the message of the apostles about the resurrection by signs, wonders and miracles.

We also see the names of the men that were chosen to be the twelve apostles. Mark 3:16-19 says, “Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, ‘Sons of Thunder’; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.” In this list and every other list of the twelve, Peter is always named first; Philip is always named fifth; and James, the son of Alphaeus, is always named ninth.

In every list of the twelve, the name of Peter is always followed by James, John and Andrew, although the order of these three may vary. Philip is always followed by Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, although the order of these three may also vary. The same thing is true for James, the son of Alphaeus. The last three also follow his name although the order may vary. This may be an indication that Jesus divided the twelve into three smaller groups. This would have made it possible for Jesus to discuss the questions of the smaller groups. One illustration of this is found in Mark 13: 3-4 where we read, “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’”

Jesus had taken the disciples with Him to a mountain and that was where He chose the twelve to be with Him. Once the twelve had been chosen Jesus returned with those twelve to Capernaum and went into the house. Since there is no mention of the owner of this house, this was probably the house that belonged to Peter and Andrew. Mark 1:29 shows that their home had been used as a gathering place at an earlier time. That verse says, “Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.” We then go on to read in Mark 3:20-21, “Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, “He is out of His mind.” As soon as the crowds heard that Jesus had come back to that city, they immediately began to gather again.

In Mark 1:33 we read, “And the whole city was gathered together at the door.” Then in Mark 2:4 we read, “And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.” However, the crowds continued to grow as Mark 3:7-8 says, “But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a

great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.” These crowds were coming from greater distances and their purpose for coming was to see and hear Jesus. As a result, the people trying to get to Jesus were around Him constantly.

There were so many people trying to get to Jesus that during this time period there was no opportunity for Jesus and His disciples to even eat. This caused His close friends to become concerned and take action. Many of these close friends were probably relatives of Jesus. These were people that had known Jesus for many years and they decided that Jesus needed to be rescued from the crowds that were continually surrounding Him.

In fact, these friends and relatives had reached the conclusion that, “He is out of His mind.” The word translated “He is out of His mind” means “*to be amazed, to be out of one’s mind or to be insane.*” This word is used in Acts 2:12-13 where we read, “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’” Here we see that the crowds could not understand what was happening and were confused. That was also true of the friends and relatives of Jesus. They could not understand why Jesus was so popular with the crowds. The people of His home town of Nazareth had rejected the teaching of Jesus. His brothers said in John 7:3-5, “His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” Those close to Jesus could not understand why the crowds were attracted to Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there were very different opinions about Jesus. Some like the religious leaders saw Jesus as a threat to their power. Others, like many in the crowds, wanted to see miracles. His family and friends thought He had gone insane. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why the various people had different opinions.

Jesus Taught about the Unpardonable Sin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why Jesus chose the Twelve. We also saw that we want our children to understand why the people had many different opinions about Jesus. In this topic, we are going to see what Jesus taught about the unpardonable sin.

We have seen that the scribes and Pharisees that came from Jerusalem were looking for an excuse to accuse Jesus. Mark 3:22-27 says, “And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub,’ and, ‘By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’ So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.’” Jesus knew the thoughts that the scribes and Pharisees were thinking and so He spoke a parable to them.

Matthew 12:24-25 says, “Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.’” Many places in the Old Testament we see that Baal was the god of the Philistines. The name “Baal-Zebul” originally meant “*Baal, the prince*”. However, the Jews changed that name just slightly to mock the Philistines and called their god “Baal-Zebub” which means “*Lord of the Flies*.” Here we see that the scribes used this name to say that Jesus was possessed by this prince of the demons and that was who gave Him the power to cast out demons.

Jesus began by asking the scribes and Pharisees a question. Jesus said, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Instead of using the name of the Philistine god, Jesus showed that Satan is the one who gives power to the demons that work to do evil through false gods. Jesus just asked if Satan would fight against himself. Then Jesus gave some illustrations of what Satan would be doing if he was divided against himself. When a kingdom is divided so that the people are fighting against each other that kingdom cannot stand. The same is true in a family. A family that is divided and having conflict among themselves cannot stand. Jesus said the same thing is true of Satan. If Satan is divided against himself, he will never be able to stand. In fact, Jesus said that his kingdom has an end.

Then Jesus said in Mark 3:27, “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.” Three times in the book of John, Jesus called Satan the ruler of this world – John 12:31, John 14:30 and John 16:11. John 12:31-32 says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” Jesus entered the world that Satan was ruling so that He could defeat Satan. Then Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Here we see that Jesus came to set the prisoners of Satan free. Then when Jesus said “It is finished” as He hung on the cross Jesus showed why the Holy Spirit can convince the world that Satan has already been judged as stated in John 16:11. Satan knows that he has only a short time until that sentence will be carried out and he will experience eternal judgment.

After telling the scribes about the coming judgment of Satan, Jesus then spoke to the scribes and warned them about the judgment that they faced because they did not repent even though they knew He was God. Mark 3:28-30 says, “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation’ — because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’” The one thief on the cross blasphemed Jesus but when He recognized that Jesus was God he repented and said, “Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom,” Jesus responded, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” He blasphemed Jesus but was forgiven when He recognized that Jesus was Lord.

In contrast, these scribes knew that Jesus is God but they were afraid of losing their power over the people and refused to believe in Jesus. John 16:8-11 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” John 16:9 shows that the one sin that separates man from God is the sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of these scribes and they refused to believe. The Holy Spirit also convinces unbelievers of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One. These scribes saw that Jesus was sinless and yet they refused to believe. Today, the Holy Spirit convinces unbelievers of the fact that Satan has already been judged and that those who continue to follow him will share in his judgment. Jesus was present with these scribes. The Holy Spirit was convicting them and they refused to repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in Jesus even though they knew He is God.

Jesus was present and the Holy Spirit was convicting these scribes and Pharisees. However, they chose to reject the fact that they knew that Jesus had cast out demons by the power of God. Instead, they blasphemed the Holy Spirit and refused to be convicted because of their sin of unbelief. Forgiveness was available to them that day but they were rejecting the opportunity to receive that forgiveness. As a result, they were facing eternal condemnation. John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Jesus made it clear to those men that day that they faced eternal condemnation.

After Jesus had finished warning the scribes and Pharisees, He received a message. Mark 3:31-35 says, “Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.’ But He answered them, saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’” Matthew 13:55 tells us that Jesus had four half-brothers. That verse says, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?” Those half-brothers would have been born to Mary and Joseph sometime after the birth of Jesus.

It was Mary and these brothers that had sent a message into the house to let Jesus know that they were outside and wanted to talk to Him. Instead of going outside immediately to talk to them, Jesus used this opportunity to teach about the relationship that His disciples had to Him. Jesus did not put down or criticize His mother or His brothers. Instead, He elevated His followers by the question that He asked and the answer that He gave to that question. Jesus asked the question, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” What we see is that Jesus included His disciples as a part of His family as He pointed to His disciples sitting around Him.

Jesus does the same thing for us today. Romans 8:14-17 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear,

but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ 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.” In these verses, we are reminded that we are children of God. We have become joint heirs with Christ. We will one day be glorified together with Him.

However, in addition to elevating all true believers and placing them in His family, we see that Jesus also explained that our lives will be changed and transformed as we grow in Him. Jesus concluded what He said with Mark 3:35 which says, “For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” Here we see that a true believer has a desire to do the will of God. Many immature Christians often say that they have that desire but they feel that Romans 7:19-20 expresses the way that they act. Those verses say, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Such Christians feel that they are failures because they are trying to do the will of God in their own strength. Romans 7:15-25 uses the words, “I, me, my and myself” about 37 times in these verses.

In Romans 8, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times and verses 28 through 39 use the words “we, us and our” 14 times. During the times that we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit we are able to experience the blessings of Romans 8:37 moment by moment. Romans 8:37 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children come to really understand the blessings of being included in the family of Jesus. We want to show them how to experience joy in their lives more and more of the time as they learn to yield to the Holy Spirit moment by moment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to experience the blessings of being in the family of Jesus.

Jesus Gave the Parable of the Sower and the Soils

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of yielding to the Holy Spirit moment by moment. That is the only way that we can experience the Lord working through our lives instead of trying to do things in our own strength. In our topic today, we will see that we want our children to understand the parable of the four soils that Jesus gave.

We have seen that great crowds came to see Jesus heal and hear Him teach. As a result, Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee. Mark 4:1-2 say, “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching.” When Jesus had large crowds come to hear Him, He would often go either to the mountains or to the sea to teach the crowds. This did two things. First, it provided large open places where the crowd could gather to listen to Him. Second, the mountains and the water both make it easier to hear a person speak when there is a large crowd.

When Jesus saw the large crowd that was gathering, He got into a boat and sat down. Then the boat was taken a short distance out into the water. Meanwhile, the entire crowd was on the land facing the sea and Jesus as He sat in the boat. Then Jesus began to teach the crowd of people by giving many parables. This was a common way for the Jews in that day to teach. However, Jesus had a different reason for teaching with parables than most of the people who taught with parables. Matthew 13:34-35 says, “All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus used parables to speak about things that had been kept secret since the creation of the world and had never been revealed in the Old Testament.

However, even these things were kept secret from most of the people. Matthew 13:11-13 says, “He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’” Here we see that Jesus used parables to reveal truth to the disciples and to hide that truth from the multitudes because they did not repent of their sin of unbelief.

The first parable that Jesus gave was a parable about a sower and the various kinds of soil on which His seed landed. In Mark 4:3-9 Jesus said, “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, *that* some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some *seed* fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other *seed* fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’” Jesus began this parable by telling the people to “Listen” and concluded by saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Jesus knew that most of the people would not really listen or understand.

In this parable, we see that Jesus spoke about various kinds of soil that received seed. In our next topic, we will see that Jesus explained to the disciples what was taught by these various kinds of soils. We will see that the various kinds of soils are the different ways that people respond to the Word of God and the message of the Gospel. Whenever we share the Word of God with others we are sowing seed. We cannot know the hearts of the people with whom we are sharing the Word. However, God gives a promise in Isaiah 55:11, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.” Here God gives the promise that He will accomplish His purpose as we are faithful in sowing the seed of the Word of God.

At the same time, it is important for us to know that there will be different responses to the Word as we share it with others. That is one reason why it is important for us to understand the four kinds of soils mentioned in these verses. We see that some of the seed fell on the wayside. The wayside is the road or the path that goes through a field. The dirt of the road or path becomes hard and so the seed stays on top of the ground. We see that the birds will find that seed sitting on the path or the road and will eat it.

Second, we see that some seed lands on the stony ground. Stony ground means that there are rocks just below the surface of the ground. Because the seed is just barely under the dirt and sitting on top of a rock, the sun will warm the rock and the seed will spring up quickly. However, when the sun gets hot the plant will immediately wilt because there is no moisture on top of the rock to water the seed. As a result, the seed does not develop any roots and the sprout withers and dies. Third, we see that some seed lands on the thorny ground. The thorns and the weeds are already there and have taken root and so their roots get all of the water. In addition, the thorns and weeds grow quickly so they soon choke the small sprouts before they can develop into plants. As a result, the seed in the thorns also yields no crop.

Fourth, when a sower plants seeds many of the seeds land on the good ground. Jesus said that these plants grow and produce a crop. When a farmer plants grain seeds, he will usually get about eight or ten grains for each seed that he planted. However, Jesus said that when the seed of the Word of God is planted that it will produce a great harvest. Some seed will produce thirty grains. Other seed will produce as much as sixty grains. Some seed will even produce as much as a hundred grains. That is a very great harvest! Jesus said that the Word will produce a great harvest when it is shared with others. That is why it is so important that we share the Word of God instead of our own opinions.

Then Jesus made a very important statement to the crowd. Jesus said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” This same statement is made to each of the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 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. 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.” In these verses, we see that only those people who have spiritual life are able to hear with understanding. As a result, we see that the natural man cannot hear with understanding but Jesus wants everyone with spiritual life to understand.

Jesus explained to the disciples why He taught with parables when He was alone with the disciples. Mark 4:10-12 says, “But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 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.” Here we see that most of the people who heard Jesus speak that day enjoyed the parables that Jesus spoke but they had no idea what those parables meant.

Jesus said that the parables explained the mystery of the kingdom of God. In the New Testament, the word “mystery” is used to talk about something that was not revealed in the Old Testament but was revealed in the New Testament. The phrase “kingdom of God” is found 69 times in the New Testament. We see that the kingdom of God is both present and future. In Luke 17:20-21, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. Those verses say, “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 these verses, we see in the present that the kingdom of God is within the hearts of all true believers.

However, there is also a future kingdom of God when the promises about the kingdom will be fully fulfilled. In Luke 22:16-18 Jesus said, “‘For I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’” Six times in Revelation 20:1-7 we see that those verses talk about the future time when Jesus will rule on the earth for one thousand years. Revelation 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” This kingdom is still future.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ taught about both a present and a future kingdom of God. The present kingdom of God is in the hearts of all Christians because we have the Holy Spirit living within us. In the future, Jesus will have a literal rule on the earth for one thousand years. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand both the present and future kingdom of God.

Jesus Explained the Parable of the Soils

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus taught the crowds with parables. We also saw that Jesus gave a parable about a sower that sowed seed and the seed landed in four different kinds of soils. In this topic, we will see that Jesus explained to His disciples what was meant by this parable of the sower and the four soils.

The crowds of people heard the parables that Jesus spoke and enjoyed the stories but had no understanding of what those parables meant. However, Jesus gave the parables to teach His disciples and us some very important lessons. Mark 4:13-15 says, “And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.’” In the previous topic, we read in Mark 4:10, “But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.” Here we see that the disciples of Jesus also failed to understand the meaning of the parable.

Jesus then explained to the disciples that they were being given the opportunity to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. In Matthew 13:36-43, Jesus explained one of the other parables about the seed and the soils. Matthew 13:37-39 says, “He answered and said to them: ‘He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.’” Here we see that Jesus is the sower. He gives us the privilege as His servants to help in the sowing of the seed. The other thing that we see that relates to this parable is the fact that Satan is the enemy.

Jesus began this explanation by asking the question, “Do you not understand this parable?” Jesus went on to explain this parable clearly because He said that this parable was the foundation for understanding all of the parables about the kingdom of God. Then Jesus said that the key to understanding all of the parables is to understand that the sower sows the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 explains why the Word is so important. That verse says, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The opinions of men can only affect the thinking of mankind. In contrast, the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Opinions will give head knowledge but the Word of God will transform the hearts and lives of those who hear it and respond to it. This is of critical importance in our day and age just as it was in the time of Jesus.

Once we understand that the seed is the Word of God, then it becomes important to understand the various kinds of soil in which that Word is planted. The first kind of soil that Jesus mentioned was the wayside. The wayside is the road or the path so the seed will remain on the road instead of going into the soil. When Jesus spoke this parable to the crowd, He said that the birds of the air came and devoured the seed. Here we see that Jesus explained what that meant. Some people have hard hearts. With those people, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. Notice that the Word does go to the heart. However, Satan takes the Word out of the hearts of the hard hearted. As a result, such individuals hear the Word and immediately forget it.

Jesus went on to also explain each of the other kinds of soil. Mark 4:16-19 says, “These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” The second kind of soil is the people who have stony hearts.

Jesus pointed out one thing about the people who have hearts that are like stony soil that is different from those who have hard hearts. We see that people with stony hearts immediately receive the Word with gladness. Here we see that these people make an emotional response to the Word of God and to the Gospel. Such individuals want a religious experience that will make them feel good. The thing that happens in the hearts of such individuals is that the Word does not take root in their hearts so that they become rooted in Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” We read that such individuals only enjoy their experience for a period of time. When any kind of trouble or persecution comes to the life of such a person, that person will say that he tried Christianity and it didn’t work for him. Many people today have religious experiences but do not take root in Christ and His love by repenting of their sin of unbelief. We read that such people immediately stumble because there is a lack of true repentance and faith.

Jesus talked about a third group of people whose hearts are like the thorny soil. We see that this soil talks about the people that have their total focus on this world. First, some of these people have their focus on the cares of this world. The word translated “cares” means “*anxiety or care*.” Here we see that people can become so focused on the problems that they have in this world that those problems choke out the Word of God that they have heard. Paul wrote to the people of Colosse in Colossians 3:2 and said, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” People can hear the Word of God, but if they do not set their mind on the things above, the things of this world will soon choke out the Word that they have heard.

Second, we see that some of the people in this group have the Word choked out by the deceitfulness of riches. 1 Timothy 6:10 warns, “For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Jesus gave an even stronger warning when He said in Matthew 6:19-21, “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.” Here we see that Jesus pointed out the fact that our heart will be where our treasure is. If the treasures of this earth are in the heart of a person, those treasures will choke out the Word that a person hears and the Word will never take root.

Third, we see that the desires for other things can also enter in and choke the Word. 1 John 2:15-16 says, “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.” Satan continually uses these three ways to tempt people. Satan used all three to get Eve to believe Him instead of believing God. 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.” When people have their hearts focused on the world, these are the three ways that Satan will tempt them to try and choke the Word when they hear the Word.

However, Mark 4:20 goes on to say, “But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” We want to learn to work with the Trinity as we share the Word of God with others so that many people will have the Word take root in their hearts and bear the fruit of salvation. The Holy Spirit convicts and convinces the unbeliever of three things. John 16:8-11 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” We work with the Holy Spirit by sharing verses that focus on the sin of unbelief. We work with the Holy Spirit as we share verses that show Jesus the Righteous One could pay the penalty for sin. We work with the Holy Spirit as we share verses that show that Satan was defeated when Christ said on the cross, “It is finished” and that Satan is now on death row facing eternal judgment.

In John 6:44, Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We work with the Father by praying that the Father will draw individuals to Christ. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” We work with the Son by sharing the need for repentance and faith. Then we work with the entire Trinity as we share the Word and pray that the Lord will open the eyes of those who are hearing the Word. Acts 26:18 says, “To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” We see that all those who are like the good soil will both believe and become fruitful. Jesus said here that every true believer will become fruitful and bear fruit at various levels. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to work with the Trinity by sharing the Word and praying that the Lord will open the hearts of those who hear the Word so that the Word brings forth fruit in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to work with the Trinity as they share the Word with others.

Jesus Taught the Parable of the Lamp

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to work with the Trinity as they share the Word of God with those who are not Christians. We also want to help them understand that the hearts of individuals are like the various kinds of soils and so they need to pray that the Lord will open the hearts of those with whom they share so that those individuals are able to hear, understand and allow the Word to bring forth fruit in their hearts. In this topic, we will see that Jesus gave two additional parables.

The first parable is about a lamp. Mark 4:21-23 says, “Also He said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’” In the time of the New Testament, a lamp was just a small clay bowl with a spout. The people would put oil in the clay bowl and then put a wick into the oil through the spout. The oil that came up the wick would cause the wick to burn and give light in the house.

Since the purpose of the lamp was to give light to the house, Jesus asked if anyone would put that lamp under a basket or under a bed. The answer was obvious to all who heard Jesus that day. Then Jesus asked another question. He said, “Is it not to be set on a lampstand?” Again the answer was obvious. Jesus went on to explain why He had asked those questions. Jesus said that there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. A key to remember is that these parables were about the kingdom of God. At that time, Jesus was teaching His disciples about the kingdom of God. However, the plan of Jesus was to equip the disciples to spread the kingdom of God throughout the world. The final words of Jesus before He returned to heaven are given in Acts 1:8 where we read, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This verse clearly explains that the plan for the kingdom of God is for the entire world.

Jesus also said, “Nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.” We saw in an earlier topic that the scribes from Jerusalem were already looking for an excuse to condemn Jesus. Later when Jesus was placed on trial, the high priest asked Jesus about His teaching. We see His answer in John 18:20-21, “Jesus answered him, ‘I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.’” Jesus made it very clear that He had not said things in secret. The problem of the religious leaders was the fact that they heard parables just like this one but they lacked spiritual understanding. That is why Jesus said here as He did at other times, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” The scribes and Judas could not hear with spiritual understanding.

Jesus went on to explain the importance of both hearing and obeying. Mark 4:24-25 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’” The word translated “take heed” means “*to have spiritual understanding or to see.*” Jesus wanted His disciples to have spiritual understanding even if that understanding was lacking in the lives of the crowds and the religious leaders.

The phrase, “With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you,” was an

encouragement to the disciples to make a real effort to both hear and understand the parables that Jesus spoke. We can hear and we will soon forget. Then we will not be given more. In contrast, we can hear, pray that the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and then obey what the Word of God says. Solomon prayed in 1 Kings 3:9, “Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” We need to have the same attitude that Solomon showed in this verse and ask the Lord to give us an understanding heart as we study the Word of God. Then we need to follow the instructions given in James 1:22 which say, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

As we hear, pray for understanding, and then obey what the Word of God says, Jesus promised that we will be given more understanding. This is the thing that will make it possible for our lives to have an impact for eternity. In contrast, those who are not Christians cannot pray and ask the Holy Spirit for spiritual understanding. Like the crowds in the day of Jesus, they will just hear and then forget because they lack spiritual understanding. They may enjoy what they hear but their hearts are like one of the first three kinds of soils given in the earlier part of this chapter. Because they do not understand and obey, the Word that they have heard is quickly forgotten.

Then Jesus went on to explain what happens in the lives of people whose hearts are like the good ground. Mark 4:26-29 says, “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” Here we see that we will learn more when we are obedient and share the Word of God with others. We see that as we scatter seed by sharing the Word of God with others, the Lord will work through the Word shared. Psalm 126:5-6 gives us a wonderful promise. Those verses say, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.” We are to share the Word of God.

One of the things that this parable teaches us is that we do not know what happens in the hearts of people after we have shared the Word of God with them. The Lord is the One who must work in the hearts. That is why in the previous parable we saw that the hearts of people can be like four kinds of soil. Some are hard-hearted; they hear the Word of God and Satan quickly takes the Word out of their hearts. Some have hearts like rocky soil; they immediately receive the Word with gladness, but quickly turn from it when tribulation or persecution arises. Some have hearts like thorny soil; their hearts are turned away by the cares of this world. However, many are like the good soil; their hearts hear the Word of God, accept it and bear fruit.

This parable talks about what happens in those whose hearts are like good soil. We see that the Word takes root and begins to grow in those whose hearts are like good soil. However, we cannot know how it is growing in their hearts because only God can know the hearts. The thing that the Word teaches us is that the Holy Spirit is the One who is causing the Word to take root and begin to grow. Jesus promised in John 16:7-8, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” In these verses, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. He also said that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of those who are like good soil to do three things for those who are not Christians. In verses 9 through 11, we see that the Holy Spirit will convict them of their sin of unbelief; He will convict and convince them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One; and He will convince them that Satan has already been judged and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment.

In some individuals, the seed will grow rapidly while in others it will grow very slowly. That is why we cannot know in whose hearts the Word is taking root and how it is growing. With some people, we will see that they begin to resist more because the Holy Spirit is convicting them of their sin of unbelief and they resist. That was certainly true of Saul who later became Paul. Acts 8:3 says, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison." In his case, the Lord had to knock him to the ground to get his attention. Acts 9:3-4 says, "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" In contrast, others begin to ask many questions because of the Holy Spirit convicting them.

Both are being drawn by the Father as John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." We saw in the earlier parable that the good soil is the heart. Here Mark 4:28 says, "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head." God prepares the hearts and He causes the Word to take root in those whose hearts are like good soil. We see that the seed continues to grow until the crop is ready to harvest. When the harvest is ready the sower immediately harvests the crop. Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." We see that we are working with the entire Trinity as we share the Word of God with those who are not yet Christians.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to work effectively with each member of the Trinity by showing them how to share the Word of God with love and especially share the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to work with the Trinity in evangelism.

Jesus Gave the Parable of the Mustard Seed

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to work effectively with the Trinity in evangelism by learning to share the Word of God in love. In our topic today, we are going to learn about another of the parables that Jesus gave and then see the way that Jesus taught the disciples to have faith in Him.

Jesus gave a parable about a mustard seed to illustrate the kingdom of God. Mark 4:30-32 says, “Then He said, ‘To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? *It is* like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.’” Here we see that Jesus used the mustard seed as an illustration of the kingdom of God. In the land of Israel, the mustard seed was the smallest seed that the people planted for food as it was smaller than any of the other herbs.

Jesus taught several things about the kingdom of God through this parable about the mustard seed. The fact that it is the smallest seed planted for food is an indication that the kingdom of God started out very small. Acts 1:15 says, “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said.” Here we see that between the time of the return of Jesus to heaven in Acts 1 and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, there were only 120 people gathered in the upper room. There were probably some others who were in Galilee because 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” Here we see that more than 500 people called brethren saw Jesus at one time after His resurrection. The word “brethren” would indicate that they were also disciples. That was still a very tiny group in comparison to the people throughout the world.

We see that the mustard tree grows large enough so that the birds can build nests on its branches. The mustard plant can grow to about 15 feet high and develop some rather large branches especially in comparison to the size of its tiny seed. That is why it is possible for birds to build their nests on the branches. In the Old Testament, several verses point out the fact that the Gentiles would also be included in the kingdom of God. 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.” In these verses, we see that it has always been the plan of God that the people to the ends of the earth will one day fear Him. As a result, the birds probably picture Gentiles who will be in the kingdom of God.

Jesus also taught many other parables. Mark 4:33-34 says, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” The crowds heard the parables about the kingdom of God but to most of the people they were just interesting stories. The religious leaders and many of the people in the crowds had no interest in becoming disciples of Jesus. Their hearts were like the three kinds of soil in the first parable in this chapter. The religious leaders were already showing their rejection of Jesus. As a result, Jesus spoke in parables when He spoke about the kingdom of God.

In contrast to the crowds, we see that when they were alone, Jesus explained all things to His disciples. This was an illustration of what Jesus had said in Mark 4:24-25 where we read,

“Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’” The crowds heard parables and enjoyed the stories. The disciples understood that the parables were about the kingdom of God and Jesus explained what they meant. As a result, the disciples heard and understood and they received more.

We also see that Jesus taught the disciples a lesson in a very different way that evening. Mark 4:35-38 says, “On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side.’ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’” Jesus had been teaching throughout the day. In fact, He had been teaching from a small boat because of the great crowd that had gathered on the shore. Jesus knew that the easiest way to tell the crowds to leave was to say to His disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side.” Jesus knew that once He and the disciples left by boat, most of the people would walk home around the edge of the lake.

However, some of the people had come in other little boats. As a result, these other little boats followed Jesus and the disciples when they started across the lake (Sea of Galilee). The disciples did not know it but Jesus was planning to teach them a very important lesson as they crossed the lake. We see that a great windstorm arose as they were crossing the lake. The Sea of Galilee is about 690 feet below sea level and is surrounded by mountains and steep valleys. In fact, Mount Hermon on the north side of the sea is about 9,200 feet high. Sudden wind storms commonly happen in this area, especially between the months of May and October. Since several of the disciples had been fishermen on this lake, they were used to sudden storms. However, this storm was much worse than the usual storms even though the wind storms were often severe.

We see that this storm was so severe that the boat was already starting to fill with water. Luke 8:23 says, “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.” Here we see that the disciples realized that their lives were in danger. This indicates that they had never been in a storm so severe in the past because they thought that this storm would drown them. Meanwhile, Jesus was in the back of the boat and had gone to sleep on a pillow. Here we see a real picture of the fact that Jesus was fully human as well as being fully God. He was so tired after an entire day of teaching and healing that He slept right through the storm in spite of the fact that the boat was going up and down with every wave.

Then the disciples came to Jesus and woke Him up. They said, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Matthew 8:25-26 says, “Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” Here we see that the disciples were filled with an extreme fear because they thought that they would soon be dead. That same fear probably controlled the lives of all of the people that were in the other little boats that were following them as they crossed the sea.

We go on to read what Jesus did after the disciples woke Him. Mark 4:39-41 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?’ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’” Jesus then got up and rebuked the wind. The word translated “rebuked” means “*to charge something sharply*.” As a result, we see that Jesus told the wind to

immediately stop.

Usually, when waves are ten or twelve feet high, it takes them a period of time for the waves to go down even after the wind stops blowing. However, after speaking to the wind, Jesus then spoke to the sea and said, "Peace, be still!" We see that immediately the wind stopped and there was a great calm on the sea. Jesus had just demonstrated that He was totally man by the fact that He was so exhausted that He could sleep through the storm even though the boat was going up and down and beginning to fill with water. He now demonstrated by this miracle that He is also fully God because He has total control over everything that happens on the earth.

Then Jesus used the storm to help the disciples grow in their faith. Jesus just asked the question, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Here we see that Jesus allowed this storm so that the disciples and those in the other little boats could more fully understand that Jesus is God. They could have faith in Him because He has control over all things. The disciples were filled with fear and amazement when they saw what Jesus had just done. They were forced to realize that Jesus was not just a prophet. That was why they asked the question, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" They would see Jesus perform many other signs in the days that followed this event. Mark 8:27-29 says, "Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.'" By the time Jesus asked this question, we see that the disciples had come to realize that Jesus is the Christ.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children come to a clear understanding of the fact that Jesus is the Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow to a full understanding of this fact.

Jesus Met a Demon Possessed Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children come to a clear understanding of the fact that Jesus is the Christ. The disciples came to understand that fact as they saw Jesus perform various signs that showed that He is God. The previous evening, Jesus had shown His control over a very severe storm. In this topic and the next, we are going to see one of the signs that Jesus gave to the disciples to help them understand that He is truly God as Jesus showed He had control over the demons.

By the time Jesus and the disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee after the storm, we see that it was the next day. Mark 5:1-5 says, “Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.” We see that the place to which Jesus and the disciples came was the area where the Gadarenes lived.

There was a small town near the Sea of Galilee called Gergesa. It was under the government of the city of Gadara, which was located about six miles from the Sea of Galilee. As a result, these people were called by two different names – the Gadarenes or the Gerasenes. Jesus and the disciples were immediately met by two men. Matthew 8:28 says, “When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.” Here we see that the two men were very dangerous. Mark only mentions one of the men because he was probably much fiercer than the other.

We see that these men lived in the tombs. These were small caves where the bodies of the dead were buried. Matthew mentions the fact that these men were so dangerous that no one would even go near that place for fear of these men. The man mentioned in Mark was especially dangerous and fierce because no one was able to bind him even with chains. We see that this man had tremendous strength. In order to try and control this man, the people of the area had often bound him with shackles and with chains. The word translated “shackles” were chains or cords that were used to tie the feet to each other so that such individuals could only take short steps. The chains were made of heavy metal and were designed to prevent prisoners from escaping.

We see that these shackles and chains did not protect the people of the area from this man. We see that the demons gave this man so much strength that he was able to pull apart the chains and break the shackles. In fact, it was impossible for anyone to control this man. That would explain why none of the people that lived in this area would even go near the tombs where these men lived. The people were controlled by fear because they did not know what these men might try to do.

However, this man was also a danger to himself as well as to other people. At any time of the day or night, he might begin crying or screaming. He also cut himself on the stones in an effort to try and destroy himself. This reminds us of the goal of Satan. John 10:10 says, “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.” Here we see that the goal of Satan is to kill and destroy life. In contrast, we see that Jesus came to give life. That was what Jesus did for this

man that day.

Mark 5:6-7 says, “When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’” Here we see that this man was a great distance from where Jesus got out of the boat. The man saw Jesus and the disciples getting out of the boat and immediately started running to the place where Jesus was. However, the man did something that was very surprising considering the fact that the people were afraid of him because he was so fierce.

When this man got to Jesus, we see that he worshiped Jesus. The word translated “worshiped” means “*to fall on the knees in respect and reverence.*” The man was desperate for help and realized that Jesus is the Son of God. His greatest desire was to be set free from the control of the demons that were trying to destroy him. Then the man cried out with a loud voice, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.” Here we see that the demons in this man were forced to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. The demons do know who Jesus is. However, James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” The demons know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God but that causes them to tremble because they know that their judgment is coming. These demons recognized that Jesus had the power to send them to immediate eternal judgment if He chose to do so.

We see that the voice that spoke through the man was the voice of one of the demons who had a great fear that Jesus would send all of the demons in the man to immediate judgment. Demons know that their judgment is coming because of their rebellion against God. Matthew 8:29 says, “And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’” This verse shows that the demons know that their future judgment is certain. The word translated “implore” means “*to ask to take an oath.*” The request of the demons here is to be allowed to wait until the time of the final judgment for their judgment and so the demon asked Jesus to promise not to send them to that judgment immediately.

Jesus then asked the demon that was speaking to Him to give his name. Mark 5:8-10 says, “For He said to him, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ Then He asked him, ‘What *is* your name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name *is* Legion; for we are many.’ Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.” Here we see that Jesus had already told the demons to leave the man. That is why the demon made his request for Jesus to promise that Jesus would not send them to immediate judgment when they came out of the man. As long as they were in the man, they could speak through the voice of the man to communicate their request to Jesus.

However, the demons had no power to reject the request of Jesus because Matthew 28:18 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Then 1 John 4:4 also says, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” That is why we do not need to fear demons. Christ put the Holy Spirit in us at the moment of salvation, which means Christ has overcome Satan and all of his demons so that we do not need to fear them. These demons knew that they had to leave the man but they wanted to postpone their eternal judgment as long as possible.

Jesus had an important reason for asking the demon his name. Jesus wanted us to understand that more than one demon can take possession of the body of a person that is not a Christian. The demon answered the question by saying, “My name *is* Legion; for we are many.” Here we see that there were many demons that were living in this man. That was why his torment was

so great. A legion in the Roman army included 6,000 men if the legion was at full strength. This meant that the man was being tormented by an extremely large number of demons that had taken possession of his body. That is why the demon that was speaking said “we are many”.

We see that the demon kept requesting that Jesus would not send them out of the country. The word translated “send” means “*to order one to depart or to send one away to an appointed place.*” That is why the demon requested not to be sent out of that country. He knew that if they were sent to their appointed place that they would be sent to immediate judgment. Revelation 20:10 describes the final judgment of Satan when that verse says, “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” The demons know that is where they will go at the final judgment but their request not to be sent out of the country meant that they wanted to postpone that time until the time of the final judgment.

That is also the final judgment of all those who reject Christ because Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Then Revelation 21:8 adds, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Here we see that all people who fail to repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in Christ will also share in that eternal judgment. There they will be eternally separated from God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the demons wanted to postpone their eternal judgment until the time of the final judgment. They know how terrible that eternal judgment will be. That is also why we want to help our children learn to explain clearly to others how to receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the Gospel.

Jesus Healed a Demon Possessed Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why demons wanted to postpone their eternal judgment until the time of the final judgment. Jesus told a large number of demons to leave the man and one asked Jesus not to send them out of the country. That postponed the beginning of their eternal judgment. We will see that Jesus then went on to heal the demon-possessed man.

Mark 5:11-13 says, “Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, ‘Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.’ 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.” Swine (pigs) were considered unclean animals by Jews and as a result the Jews did not eat them. However, some Jews were unconcerned about the law and may have been raising them to sell to the Gentiles. It is also possible that the men caring for these pigs were Gentiles. Either way, the large number of pigs there that day shows that many Gentiles also lived in this area.

The fact that the demons begged to go into such a large group of pigs would also show that a large number of demons had taken possession of this man. Many new Christians today ask if it is possible for a Christian to become demon possessed. 1 John 4:4 says, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” This verse shows that the One dwelling in us is greater than any demonic spirit. 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.” Here we see that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living within him as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal inheritance. Galatians 2:20 also tells us that we have Christ living in us when that verse says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

John 10:10 explains the goal of Satan when that verse says, “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.” The goal of Satan is always to steal, kill and destroy. This passage teaches that the demons have the same goal. When Jesus gave the demons permission to go into the pigs, we see that the demons tormented the pigs so severely that the pigs destroyed themselves by running down a steep place into the Sea of Galilee where they were drowned by the sea.

The fact that this large herd of pigs all committed suicide filled the pig herders with fear. Mark 5:14-17 says, “So those who fed the swine fled, and they told *it* in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him *who had been* demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.” The pig herders were so fearful that they ran to save their own lives (probably because of fear of what the demons might do to them). As the pig herders fled, they told everyone that they saw both in the city and in the country what had happened to the pigs.

Then many people came out to see what had happened. What the people found when they

arrived was a changed man. Luke 8:27 describes the former condition of the man when that verse says, “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.” In addition to being very fierce, we see that this man had formerly worn no clothes as he lived in the caves used for tombs. In contrast to his past, the people saw that this man was now sitting and talking with Jesus. He was also clothed and in his right mind. This was a great change from his former condition as 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.” This man was enjoying the blessing of being set free from the control of the demons.

However, the people who came out of the city had a different reaction. We see that these people were afraid. For a long time, the people had been afraid to go near this man because he was so fierce. Suddenly, they saw that the man was in his right mind and acting normally. The pig herders had told the people what happened to their pigs. Now the people saw that this man was normal and they realized why their pigs had run down the steep place and drowned themselves in the Sea of Galilee. They realized that the demons had left the man and had entered into the pigs causing the pigs to destroy themselves. As a result, these people began to plead with Jesus to leave their territory. To these people, their pigs were more important to them than the man that was healed.

The fact that this man was now in his right mind showed the people that Jesus had power to change and transform lives. In the time of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had also been restored to his right mind by God. Daniel 4:36-37 says, “At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.” In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, it caused him to recognize and honor the King of heaven. His life was changed from that of being a proud king, to one who had become a humble man who recognized and honored the living God. In this same way, this man was now in his right mind and recognized Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus chose to leave the area since the people wanted Him to leave their region. Mark 5:18-20 says, “And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. 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.” Here we see the man who had the demons cast out of him did not feel the same way as the other people. Instead, he begged to go with Jesus.

However, Jesus did not permit the man to go with Him in the boat. Instead, Jesus had an immediate ministry for the man. We see that Jesus told the man to go home to his family and friends and tell them. First, the man was told to tell his friends about the great things that the Lord had done for him. This man had his physical life transformed. Look at the contrast between Luke 8:27 and Luke 8:35. Luke 8:27 says, “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.” In contrast, Luke 8:35 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.” This man was now able to live a normal life

Second, and more important, the man was told to tell his friends about the fact that Jesus had shown compassion to him. The word translated “compassion” is normally translated “to have

mercy.” Romans 11:30-32 says, “For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” 1 Peter 2:9-10 also uses this word when those verses say, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” In both passages, we see that it speaks about those who receive mercy also receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This man now had spiritual life.

The people of that area had rejected Jesus because of their pigs but Jesus still wanted them to hear how to have eternal life. That was why Jesus sent this man to tell his friends what Jesus had done for him. The word “Decapolis” means “*ten cities.*” This man did not limit the good news of what Jesus had done for him to his friends. Instead, we see that this man went throughout the ten cities of that region telling how Jesus had changed and transformed his life. The word translated “marveled” means to “*be filled with amazement or wonder.*” It is used in Acts 4:13 where we read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” In this verse, we see that the religious leaders who had condemned Jesus to death were filled with amazement as they saw the boldness of Peter and John. This was the way the people in the area of Decapolis felt when they heard the man who had been demon-possessed.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message that Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost. Regardless of the present condition of any person in the world, the Lord is able to change and transform their lives. That is the message of hope that we want to equip our children to share. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message.

Jesus Healed a Woman who Touched Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Jesus came to change and transform lives today just as He changed the life of the man that had been demon-possessed. We saw that the people of the surrounding area were filled with fear and asked Jesus to leave their area. Jesus then got into a boat and left the area. We will see what happened when Jesus reached the other side.

Mark 5:21-24 says, “Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’ So *Jesus* went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.” As we see in these verses, a large crowd of people were waiting for Jesus when He returned. The people on this side of the Sea of Galilee had heard the teaching of Jesus and were ready to hear more.

We see that one of the rulers of the synagogue named Jairus came to Jesus with a request. The rulers of the synagogue were the group of elders who were responsible for all of the things that happened in the synagogue including the arranging of the services in the synagogue. We see that Jairus came looking for Jesus. When Jairus saw Jesus, he immediately fell at the feet of Jesus to make his request. When a person fell at the feet of another, it was an act of worship. Acts 10:25-26 says, “As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I myself am also a man.’” Here we see that Peter did not want to be worshiped in this way because he felt this act of worship should be reserved for God. It is possible that Jairus might have been showing that he recognized that Jesus is God.

However, the words that Jairus then spoke showed that Jairus at least recognized that Jesus had the power to heal. Jairus said, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.” This statement shows that Jairus did not realize that Jesus could have healed his daughter just by speaking the word. Jesus illustrated that power when he said to a nobleman in John 4:50, “Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your son lives.’ So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.” In that case, the nobleman believed and a servant met him on the way home to tell him that his son was healed. Jairus did realize that Jesus could touch his daughter and she would live. A very large crowd of people followed Jesus and Jairus as they began to walk toward his house.

However, something happened to slow their progress as they were on their way to the house of Jairus. Mark 5:25-28 says, “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, ‘If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.’” Here we see that this woman also believed that Jesus could heal. We see that this woman had a flow of blood that had lasted for twelve years. This was both a serious physical and religious problem.

As a physical problem, it meant that she was losing blood internally, which would make her very weak. The woman had gone to many different doctors. Luke 8:43 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.” Since Luke was a doctor, this means that the other doctors felt her condition could not be cured because they had tried every possible treatment that they knew. As a result, she had lived in a hopeless condition for years. Regardless of what the various doctors had tried, her condition had just become worse.

It was a religious problem because 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 the woman and any bed that she used were also considered unclean. This meant she could not enter the synagogue or the temple and also meant that even her own family may have avoided her. As a result, she desperately wanted to be healed.

The woman did not feel that she could ask Jesus to touch her to heal her because Leviticus said that would have made Jesus unclean and He would have had to bathe and wash his clothes. However, she had heard about Jesus and believed that He could heal her. As a result, she came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his robe. Mark tells us what she had said within herself, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.” Here we see that she had faith that just touching the robe of Jesus would cause her to be healed of this condition which none of the doctors could heal.

We see that God rewarded her faith. Mark 5:29-34 says, “Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My clothes?’ But His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, “Who touched Me?”’” And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” Jesus knew what had happened but He wanted to honor the faith of the woman.

We see what the woman recognized a change as soon as she touched the hem of the robe of Jesus. The source of her bleeding was immediately stopped and she was healed. The woman felt an immediate change in her body. Such bleeding causes a person to feel very weak. Suddenly, this woman felt renewed strength and knew that the bleeding was stopped. She knew that she had been healed of her affliction and was filled with joy at that moment. However, Jesus also knew that power had gone out of His body and knew that the woman had been healed. Jesus chose to honor the faith of the woman in front of the entire crowd of people that were following Him that day.

Jesus stopped and turned around to face the crowd that was following Him. Then Jesus asked the question, “Who touched My clothes?” In contrast, the disciples did not know what had happened or that Jesus wanted to honor the faith of the woman. As a result, the disciples told Jesus that there was a large crowd pressing toward Him from all sides. That meant that a number of people had touched Jesus. The disciples could not understand why Jesus had asked, “Who touched Me?” Jesus just looked around at the crowd and then looked particularly at the woman who had been healed.

The woman became filled with fear as Jesus kept looking at her. In fact, she even started to

shake in her fear. She knew that she had been healed and probably thought that Jesus was upset with her for touching His clothes knowing that Leviticus said that would make Him unclean. As a result, the woman came and fell down in front of Jesus. We read that she told Jesus the whole truth. Remember that Jairus was concerned about his daughter and here Jesus took time to let the woman tell all about the suffering that she had gone through for the previous twelve years. She probably told how she thought that if she could just touch the hem of the robe of Jesus, she would be healed. She then explained that she had felt an immediate change in her body as soon as she touched the robe of Jesus. He allowed her to finish her whole story.

Then Jesus spoke to the woman and called her daughter. Jesus told her that her faith had made her well. The word translated “has made you whole” is the word that is normally translated “save.” Matthew 1:21 says, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” Christ used the same word when He spoke to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:10 and said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” The word is used again in Romans 10:9 and 13 which say, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’” These verses all make it clear that the woman received spiritual life by faith that day in addition to physical healing.

Jesus told this woman that she could now return to her home in peace. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” She had received spiritual healing as well as physical healing. Then Jesus assured her of the fact that she was healed of her physical affliction.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others how they can receive spiritual life that will give them this inner peace that passes all understanding. They will receive that spiritual life when they repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the message of peace with others.

Jesus Raised the Daughter of Jairus

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others how they can receive eternal life that will give them inner peace that passes all understanding. That happens as our children learn to clearly explain the meaning of repentance from the sin of unbelief and faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, the healing of this woman had slowed the progress of Jesus toward the house of Jairus who had asked Jesus to come and heal his daughter. Mark 5:35 says, “While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue’s *house* who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’” Here we see that Jesus was still talking to the woman who had been healed of the internal bleeding that she had suffered with for twelve years. Suddenly, a messenger arrived from the house of Jairus. This messenger told Jairus that his daughter had died. The messenger then said that it was no use to bother Jesus anymore because it was too late. His daughter was already dead.

Jairus had just seen how Jesus had healed the woman that had touched the robe of Jesus. He had believed that the same thing could happen to his daughter if Jesus would come and touch her. That was why Jairus had gone to Jesus with his request. As a result, this message probably brought great fear and sorrow to the heart of Jairus. We see that Jesus then immediately spoke to Jairus. Mark 5:36-39 says, “As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’ And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’” Here we see that Jesus spoke to Jairus immediately because Jesus understood the fear and sorrow that Jairus felt as soon as he heard the message. Jesus urged Jairus to keep on believing.

Luke lets us know that Jesus spoke a few additional words to Jairus that day. Luke 8:50 says, “But when Jesus heard *it*, He answered him, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.’” Here we see that Jesus gave Jairus a promise that his daughter would also be made well. It did not matter to Jesus whether the girl was alive or dead. Jesus had the power to raise her back to life. Jesus later told Martha when her brother died in John 11:25-26, “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” Jesus is the One who has power over death. That is why Jesus told Jairus, “Do not be afraid; only believe.” Jesus knew that he was immediately filled with fear and sorrow and needed to keep on believing.

When they came to the house of Jairus, we read that Jesus only allowed three disciples, Peter, James and John, to enter the house with Him. These three disciples did certain things with Jesus that none of the other disciples were allowed to do. Mark 9:2 says, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.” Only these three disciples were given the opportunity to see the glory of God when Jesus was transfigured. Then Mark 14:33 shows that Jesus took these three into the Garden of Gethsemane the night that He was betrayed. Mark 14:33-34 says, “And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch.’” These three disciples were allowed to be in the garden at the time of Jesus’ prayer

to the Father.

Jairus brought Jesus and these three disciples into his house. There Jesus saw that there was an uproar going on inside the house. We see that there were a group of people who were weeping and wailing loudly. Matthew 9:23-24 says, "When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him." We see that there were flute players and a noisy crowd doing this wailing. In that day professional mourners would quickly hurry to the home of a person that had died and then play sad music and cry loudly. This was their way to make some extra money although it did not mean that they had any real concern for the family of the one that had died.

Jesus immediately spoke to this noisy crowd. Jesus then asked the people why they were wailing and weeping. Jesus went on to say that the child was not dead. Instead, Jesus said that the child was sleeping. Jesus often described the death of true followers of God as sleeping. Jesus explained what He meant to the disciples in John 11:11-13 where we read, "These things He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.' However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep." After the resurrection, the New Testament often used this word to describe the death of Christians. In 1 Corinthians 15, this word is used four times to describe the death of a Christian. One example is 1 Corinthians 15:20 which says, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." That is the way that Jesus used the word in this verse.

However, the crowd of professional mourners did not understand what Jesus meant. They showed their lack of understanding by immediately changing from wailing and weeping to laughing and mocking. They had probably mourned for many dead people and they knew when a person was physically dead. They were trying to humiliate Jesus because He said that she was not dead. Mark 5:40-43 says, "And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, 'Talitha, cumi,' which is translated, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years *of age*. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that *something* should be given her to eat."

The word translated "ridiculed" means "*to laugh in the face of a person or to laugh a person to scorn.*" These mourners showed that they had a heart of unbelief and did not believe the words of Jesus. As a result, Jesus ordered all of them to leave the house. They did not believe and Jesus was not going to give them the opportunity to see Him raise the girl from the dead. Once the people, who were laughing at Jesus, were put out of the house, Jesus, the father, the mother and the three disciples went to the place where the girl was lying.

As the parents watched, Jesus took the girl by the hand and said, "Talitha, cumi." The word "Talitha" is the female form of the word meaning "a lamb or a young maiden". "Cumi" is a command which means "*to arise or get up.*" As a result, when these words are translated they mean, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Luke 8:55 says, "Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given *something* to eat." In this verse, we see that the spirit is what gives people physical life. That is why physical death occurs at the moment the spirit and soul are removed from the body. In fact, 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Here we see that at the very moment the spirit and soul leave the body of a Christian, he is

present with the Lord.

We see that the girl immediately got up and started walking. We also see that she was about twelve years of age. Here we see that full normal life was restored to the girl because she was able to get up and immediately begin walking. Each time that Jesus raised a person from the dead back to physical life we see that the person was also restored to a normal life. In Luke 7:14, we see that Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain back to life. That verse 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.’” Then in John 11:43 we read, “Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’” In each case, we see the person restored to normal life.

Jesus then commanded the parents and the disciples not to tell anyone about this miracle. We see in the following chapter that Jesus left that area and went to Nazareth. As a result, Jesus did not want everyone to know about this miracle before He left the area. The main concern of Jesus was to preach the Gospel and not to perform miracles. Luke 19:9-10 says, “And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” Jesus healed many people but that was not His primary purpose. His main purpose when He talked to the multitudes was to preach the Gospel. When He talked to the disciples, Jesus was equipping them for ministry when He returned to heaven. In the same way, we also want to keep sharing the Gospel our main purpose when we are talking to those who are not Christians. At the same time, we want to equip Christians for ministry when we are talking to Christians.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children develop a clear purpose for their lives both when they are talking to Christians and when they are talking to those who are not Christians. That way their lives will have meaning and purpose as they talk to both Christians and those who are not Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children clearly define their purpose as they serve the Lord.

Jesus Sent Out the Twelve

In our last topic, we saw that Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead and then told the parents and the disciples with Him not to tell anyone. We also saw that we can use this as an illustration as we help our physical and spiritual children define their purpose in life both when they are talking with Christians and when they are talking with those who are not Christians.

Jesus then went to Nazareth, the town where He had lived before He began His public ministry. Mark 6:1-6 says, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, ‘Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.” We see that the disciples of Jesus also followed Him as He went to Nazareth because this visit was now a part of His public ministry.

On the Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth and began to teach. These were the people who had known Jesus since He was a boy. As Jesus taught, we see that the people of His hometown were astonished. This was the same reaction that Jesus had received when He taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. Mark 1:22 says, “And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The word “astonished” means “*to be filled with amazement.*” The reason people were filled with amazement when they heard the teaching of Jesus was due to the fact that He taught with authority instead of teaching like the scribes. The scribes gave the opinions of other scribes about what the Old Testament taught. In contrast, we see that Jesus taught with authority. This means that Jesus explained what the Old Testament was teaching. We are also to use the Word of God to explain each passage instead of giving our own opinions so that we can speak with authority.

The people of Nazareth showed their amazement by asking the question, “Where *did* this Man *get* these things?” They also asked, “What wisdom *is* this which is given to Him?” Here we see that the people of Nazareth were forced to recognize that Jesus was teaching with authority. However, they did not understand what made it possible for Him to have such wisdom. They had also heard about the miracles that Jesus had done and wondered how Jesus could do such miracles. As a result, even with their amazement, the people responded with unbelief. In fact, at this time, that was true even of his brothers. John 7:3-5 says, “His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” We see that Jesus had four brothers and later they did believe. In fact, two of them, James and Judas, wrote the books of James and Jude.

Jesus knew that the people of Nazareth did not believe that He was God. They said they knew His mother, His brothers and His sisters. They viewed Him as just a carpenter. In fact, we read that the people of Nazareth were offended at Him. They knew that Jesus had the same limited education that each of them had received in Nazareth. They knew He had not gone to

Jerusalem to study at the feet of some well-known teacher. As a result, they did not want to accept His teaching even though they were amazed at that teaching.

Jesus knew that the people of Nazareth were rejecting Him and His teaching. To them, Jesus was just a boy that had grown up in their town and they felt no need to really listen to Him. In fact, one time after Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth Luke 4:28-29 says, “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.” That is why Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.”

Because of this unbelief, Jesus did not do a lot of miracles in Nazareth and the surrounding area. We see that He did lay His hands on a few sick people and healed them. Jesus was amazed that the people of His home town thought that they knew Him and at the same time rejected Him. The fact that Jesus had never committed any sin meant that these people had known Him for nearly thirty years and had not recognized the fact that He was without sin. Then Jesus left Nazareth and made a teaching circuit throughout the area of Galilee. Matthew 9:35 says, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” Jesus did many miracles in these other towns and cities to verify His teaching but not in Nazareth.

We go on to read in Mark 6:7-9, “And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.” After this preaching tour, Jesus sent out the Twelve to learn how to minister. Jesus had just shown them with this preaching tour what to preach and now He sent them out to learn to trust Him as they preached the same message as He prepared them for the future after His resurrection. However, Jesus also wanted to teach them that He would supply their needs as they went. That is why Jesus gave them these instructions.

Jesus sent them out two by two so that they could learn to minister as teams. He also gave them power over unclean spirits so that they had the power to cast out demons just as Jesus had done. Then He commanded them to take nothing for the journey – no bag for supplies, no food and no money. He told them to wear sandals but not to take an extra coat. Matthew 10:8-10 says, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for *your* journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.” Jesus wanted the disciples to learn that He would provide for their needs. This is an important lesson for every Christian to learn.

Then in Mark 6:10-13 we read, “Also He said to them, ‘In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!’ So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.” Here we see that the disciples were to stay in one house and not to move from house to house in each city that they visited.

Matthew 10:11-13 says, “Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is

worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.” When the disciples first arrived at a city, they were to inquire and find out who was respected. Then they were to go to that household and give that household a blessing. If the head of that household was a worthy person, Jesus said that they would be invited to stay at that home. Jesus said that the disciples were to stay at that home while they were at that city.

Jesus also told the disciples what to do if a person or a city refused to accept them and their message of the Gospel. Jesus said that when they left that city, they were to shake off the dust from their feet as a testimony against them. The Jews commonly shook the dust off their feet when they returned from a land of the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus told the disciples that Jews who rejected the Gospel were to be warned about their unbelief by seeing the messenger shake the dust off his feet. In Acts 13:45-49, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles in Antioch when the Jews refused to listen. Later in Acts 13:50-51 we read, “But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.” Here we see that Paul and Barnabas followed these instructions that Jesus had given the disciples.

We read that the Twelve then went out and preached that the people should repent. The word “repent” means “*to turn from sin and to turn to God.*” Paul later gives thanks for the Thessalonians and records how they turned from sin, when he mentioned how the whole area had heard the word of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 1:19-10 where it says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Jesus also gave the Twelve signs to confirm their message. We see that they cast out many demons and healed many that were sick.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus told the disciples to take nothing extra as they went out to preach the Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to depend on the Lord.

John the Baptist Was Put to Death

In our last topic, we saw that Jesus sent out the Twelve to help them learn that He would supply their needs as they trusted in Him. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn these same lessons. While the disciples were ministering in the villages and cities throughout Galilee, we see that Herod had put John the Baptist to death because Herod wanted to save face.

We read that Herod had begun hearing about Jesus. Mark 6:14-18 says, “Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known. And he said, ‘John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’ Others said, ‘It is Elijah.’ And others said, ‘It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.’ But when Herod heard, he said, ‘This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!’ For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.’” Here we see that Herod had a different response from most of the people when he heard about Jesus.

Herod immediately concluded that John the Baptist had risen from the dead. We see that he thought this because his conscience was bothering him. Luke 9:9 says, “Herod said, ‘John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?’ So he sought to see Him.” He wanted to see if he was John or not. Meanwhile, we see that the rest of the people were coming to different conclusions. Some of the people said that He was the Prophet. These people came to this conclusion because Deuteronomy 18:18 says, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” The Lord had spoken this to Moses when the people did not want to hear God speak directly to them from Mount Horeb (Sinai).

Other people said that Jesus was Elijah. Malachi had written in Malachi 4:5-6, “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.” These people thought that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy. At the same time, other people said that Jesus was like one of the prophets. These people thought back to what they had learned from what was written by prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. They recognized that Jesus spoke with authority and did not speak like the scribes. Matthew 7:28-29 says, “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The scribes usually quoted the opinions of others.

We see why Herod had come to a different conclusion than any of the other people. John the Baptist had told Herod that it was wrong for him to have married the wife of his brother Philip who was named Herodias. Herod and Philip both had a half-brother named Aristobulus. Herodias was the daughter of this half-brother so she was a niece to both Philip and Herod. Leviticus 18:16 says, “You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; *it is your brother’s nakedness.*” This meant that both Philip and Herod were guilty of incest with their niece. Herod was guilty of double incest because Matthew 14:3-4 says, “For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’” Herodias was also guilty of incest with both uncles and had left Philip to marry Herod. As a result, she hated John the Baptist when John told Herod that he was guilty of sin because that meant she was just as

guilty. The guilty conscience of Herod was the reason why he immediately thought that John had risen.

Herodias wanted John killed because she was so angry. Mark 6:19-24 says, “Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.’ He also swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.’ So she went out and said to her mother, ‘What shall I ask?’ And she said, ‘The head of John the Baptist!’” Herod had probably put John in prison to try to please Herodias and also to protect John from her.

However, we see that she was trying to find some way to get Herod to put John to death because she could not convince Herod to kill him. Herod was afraid of John the Baptist because he realized that he was a holy and just man. As a result, Herod protected him from Herodias. Herod was very willing to listen to John because of the great struggle that was going on in his heart. Herod was convicted by his guilty conscience. At the same time, he was controlled by the lust that he had for Herodias. As a result, his mind was filled with confusion. James 1:7-8 says, “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

We see the terrible consequences of being a double-minded man by what happened next on the birthday of Herod. Herod decided to celebrate his birthday by inviting all of the men that held high civil offices, all of the high ranking military men and all of the social leaders in the area of Galilee to his birthday party. The daughter of Philip and Herodias named Salome came into the birthday party to entertain Herod and all of his high ranking civil, military and social party leaders with her dancing. To impress these leaders Herod offered Salome whatever she wanted up to half of his kingdom for pleasing these men.

Salome then went out and talked with her mother. Matthew 14:8 says, “So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’” This was the opportunity for which Herodias had hoped. This was her opportunity to get revenge because she held it against John for saying it was not lawful for Herod to take his brother’s wife. Hebrews 12:15 warns of the consequences of bitterness when that verse says, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Herodias had allowed bitterness to take root in her life and now she had her opportunity to kill John the Baptist to take revenge.

We see what Salome did after she talked to her mother. Mark 6:25-29 says, “Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’ And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.” In front of all of the other men Salome made her request to immediately receive the head of John the Baptist on a platter. We see that Herod was overcome with sorrow when he heard the request. He knew that John was a just and holy man and that he would live with guilt for a long time.

However, Herod was more concerned about not being embarrassed in front of all of these leaders. In that day when a ruler took an oath, that oath was considered sacred and so Herod

was afraid to break his oath in front of these men. Herod immediately sent an executioner to the prison to cut off the head of John and bring the head to him on a platter. The executioners were not regular soldiers but were the personal bodyguards of Herod. In fact, his regular army was away at that very time fighting against the army of Aretas, the king of Arabia. Herod had been married to the daughter of this king and had divorced her to marry Herodias. As a result, the armies of the two kings were at war because of the humiliation Herod had caused Aretas by divorcing his daughter.

The executioner went to the prison and did as he was commanded. He beheaded John in the prison, brought the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl then took the head on a platter and gave it to her mother. Due to his guilty conscience, Herod really wanted to see Jesus to make certain that it was not John the Baptist risen from the dead. Herod had to wait a long time in order to get the opportunity to see Jesus. Throughout that time, every time he heard about Jesus, it would bring fresh guilt to him because of what he had done to John. Luke 23:6-8 says, "When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him." Herod certainly gives us a picture of the effects that guilt can have in the life of a person. Meanwhile, the men who had been disciples of John the Baptist heard what had happened and came and got the body of John and placed the corpse in a tomb.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what happened to Herod so that they can understand and explain the effects of guilt to others. That will give them many opportunities to help others come to Christ for forgiveness. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to explain the effects of guilt to others.

Jesus Fed the Five Thousand

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the effects of guilt in the life of a person. In the previous topic, we saw that Jesus had sent out the Twelve to preach that people should repent. In our topic today, we will see what happened when the disciples returned from their preaching trip.

Mark 6:30-32 says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.” We saw in an earlier topic that Jesus had taken the disciples with Him as He preached throughout the cities of Galilee. Jesus had shown them what to teach and had shown that He came from God by many miracles. Then in Mark 6:7-13 Jesus had sent the Twelve out to do what they had seen Him do. Mark 6:12-13 says, “So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.” Now we see that they had returned and Jesus gave them time to report of their ministry trip.

We see that the disciples reported two things in particular about their ministry trip. First, they told Jesus what they had done. They had seen Jesus cast out demons and heal the sick as they had traveled with Him. Now, they told Jesus that they had also cast out demons and had anointed the sick with oil and the sick were healed. In Hebrews 2:3-4 we read, “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?” Jesus confirmed the message of the apostles by signs wonders and various miracles. Later, Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” In these verses, we see that the apostles were given these signs to verify their message.

Second, the disciples reported what they had taught. Jesus had told them that they should preach that men should repent. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 explains the meaning of repentance when those verses say, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Here we see that repentance means to turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. The message of repentance became the message that the disciples preached both before and after the resurrection.

Christ reminded the disciples of the importance of preaching repentance after His resurrection before He returned to heaven. Luke 24:45-48 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.’” On the day of Pentecost, as Peter was finishing his sermon, the people asked what they should do and Peter said, “Repent.” Later Paul explained His message when he said to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:21, “Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the same way, we are to call people to repent.

Jesus knew that the disciples needed rest after their busy time of preaching. There were so many people around that they did not even have time to eat. As a result, Jesus and the disciples got into a boat to go to a deserted place to rest. However, Mark 6:33-37 says, “But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?’” The disciples had time to rest while they were crossing the Sea of Galilee but that time of rest was cut short because the multitudes went to the other side to meet them

When Jesus came out, He had compassion on the people because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. Ezekiel had written about Israel in Ezekiel 34:5, “So they were scattered because *there* was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.” Then Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16 says, “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out... I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.’” Jesus saw the people that day as sheep without a shepherd and so He began to teach them many things.

Toward the end of the day, the disciples came to Jesus and told Him to send the people away because they were in a deserted place where there was no food and the day was getting late. Instead of sending the people away, He told the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” John 6:7 says, “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” Instead of doing what Jesus said, Philip told Jesus that they had a problem. The problem was a lack of money. Remember that earlier in the day the disciples had just told the disciples about the miracles of healing that they had done. However, we see that the disciples were not able to apply what they had learned about the power of God working through their lives. They had anointed the sick with oil and saw the Lord heal the sick even though He was not traveling with them but all they could do here was give a financial report.

Mark 6:38-44 says, “But He said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have? Go and see.’ And when they found out they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’ Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.” Here we see that Jesus told the disciples to find out what was available. John 6:8-9 says, “One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’” Andrew brought a boy to Jesus that had a lunch with five rolls and two small fish.

Andrew knew that was probably only about enough for the boy and so he said that was not much considering the large crowd. Andrew did not think about it but Jesus had more to start with that day than when He spoke the entire creation into existence. Jesus understood that the disciples could not yet make the connection between the fact that the Lord had already worked

many other miracles and the need of the people that day. Jesus then told the disciples how they could participate that day. Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of hundreds and groups of fifties. This probably meant that there were fifty groups that each had one hundred people in them. The Jews often divided into groups like these for their various feasts. This would mean that each of the twelve would be responsible for about four groups and two of the disciples would have five groups to which to distribute food.

Once the people were all arranged in separate groups, Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed the lunch of the boy. Then Jesus began to break the five loaves and two fish into pieces. He then gave the disciples baskets of food to take to the various groups that were scattered around the hillside. Here we see that Jesus performed the miracle but included the disciples in the distribution. That is exactly the same thing that the Lord does in the lives of people today. Titus 3:5-7 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." In these verses, we see that all three members of the Trinity are involved in the ministry of regeneration. However, Christ gave us the responsibility to take the Word of God to the people. Mark 16:15 says, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'"

Jesus performed the miracle and all of the people ate and were filled that day. In fact, there was more than enough for the entire group. We see that the disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of food that remained after everyone had eaten all that they wanted to eat. We see that those who had eaten that day were about five thousand men. In addition, the disciples had learned a very important lesson that day. They realized that Jesus had done the miracle but that He had involved them in distributing the food to the people. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that only Christ can transform lives but He wants to use them to share the Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word with others.

Jesus Walked on the Water

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that Jesus wants to involve them in the distribution of spiritual food to others. That will happen as they learn to share the Word of God effectively with others. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened after Jesus fed the five thousand.

Jesus had finished feeding the five thousand. Then Mark 6:45-48 says, “Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.” Here we see that Jesus sent the disciples away in the boat before He sent the crowd to their homes. Jesus instructed the disciples to go to the town of Bethsaida.

Once Jesus had sent the multitude away, we see that He went to the mountain to pray. One of the key things that we notice throughout the ministry of Jesus is the many times that He went alone to pray to the Father. We see this from the beginning to the end of His public ministry. 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.” Then Mark 14:35 says, “He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.” Jesus gave us a real example for our own lives. In addition, Jesus gave specific instructions about our need to pray alone to the Father. Matthew 6:6 says, “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Meanwhile, the disciples were in the boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Mark 6:33 says, “But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.” This verse shows that the place where Jesus fed the five thousand was near the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had told the disciples to meet Him in Bethsaida which was also near the north end of the Sea of Galilee so the disciples should have only been about a mile or two from the shore. However, the wind was blowing against the disciples. In fact, by evening, we see that the boat was in the middle of the sea. Matthew 14:24 says, “But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.” This means the wind had driven the boat several miles to the south.

Jesus knew what was happening to the disciples because we read that He saw them straining at rowing because the wind was against them. Jesus was watching over them and protecting them even though they did not know that He could see them. We also see that Jesus was testing the disciples in order to teach them some very important lessons. Many of the lessons that the Lord teaches us are in difficult situations. That was also true for the disciples that night. Finally, at the fourth watch, Jesus started walking across the water so that He would pass near the boat. The fourth watch of the night was between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning. This meant that the disciples had been out in the middle of the lake for about nine hours trying to get to the shore.

As Jesus walked across the water, He chose a direction that would take Him close to the boat so that the disciples would be able to see Him as He walked on the water. Mark 6:49-52 says, “And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them,

‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.” These verses give us the reaction of the disciples when they saw Jesus coming across the water.

Instead of recognizing that it was Jesus walking near them on the water, the disciples were immediately filled with fear. Matthew 14:26 says, “And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.” The word translated “ghost” is only used in these two verses in the New Testament. It comes from the Greek word from which we get our English word phantom and speaks about seeing something that is imaginary. We see that all of the disciples saw what they thought was a ghost about the same time and they cried out in fear. Here we see that Jesus was testing their faith and He allowed them to row the boat for many hours before this happened so that they were both fearful and exhausted by the time they saw Him.

Jesus could see that they were troubled and fearful so He immediately spoke to them and said, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” Every time the phrase “Be of good cheer!” was used in the New Testament, it was during a time when a person was fearful either because of sickness or disease, or in a situation like the disciples experienced here. In Acts 23:11 we read, “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.’” Paul had nearly been killed by the Jews the previous day and so the Lord knew that He needed encouragement. That was exactly what the disciples also needed as they were in the boat that night. Jesus then walked to the boat and got into the boat with the disciples.

As soon as Jesus got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. The disciples saw the wind stop and they were filled with amazement and wonder as they saw what happened when Jesus came into the boat with them. We read the amazement was due to the fact that their hearts were hardened. The word translated “hardened” means “*to make the heart dull or to blind.*” 2 Corinthians 3:14 tells us one reason their hearts were hardened. “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.” The disciples had not yet fully understood that Jesus was (is) truly God. The previous afternoon, Jesus had showed that He was (is) God. He had shown this by multiplying one small lunch so that there was enough food to feed five thousand people. The disciples did not understand that miracle was to show them that Jesus was (is) God. 2 Corinthians 3:16-17 points out, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.” Christ allowed the disciples to work long and hard that night so that He could bring understanding to their hearts.

We go on to read what happened the next day when they reached the land. Mark 6:53-56 says, “When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.” The disciples anchored their boat when they reached Gennesaret on the northwest shore of the sea.

The people there immediately recognized Jesus when He and the disciples got out of the boat. Some of the people ran through the surrounding region letting the people know that Jesus was there. As a result, the people began carrying the sick on their beds to whatever city or village they heard that Jesus was visiting. Then the people would lay the sick in the open places with

the hope that Jesus might pass by that place.

We see that the request of these people was that they might just touch the hem of the robe that Jesus wore. This tells us that the people had heard about the woman who had the issue of blood and was healed. Mark 5:27-29 says, “When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, ‘If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.’ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction.” Jesus called attention to the faith of that woman. Mark 5:34 says, “And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” Jesus had healed the woman when she had touched the hem of His garment.

As a result, we see that the request of all of these sick that were lying in the open places was to touch the hem of the robe of Jesus so that they could also be healed of their sicknesses. We see that every person that did touch the hem of the robe of Jesus was made well. Just like the woman in chapter 5, these people had to exercise their faith in Jesus by reaching out and touching His robe. Jesus said in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” God honored such faith throughout the Bible. Numbers 21:7-9 says, “Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” When people turn to the Lord in repentance and faith He will give life. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how they can also come to Christ and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others how to have eternal life.

Jesus Taught About the Traditions of Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how to come to Christ and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In this topic, we will see that some of the Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to find fault with Jesus. They accused the disciples of Jesus because the disciples were not following the traditions of the elders.

Mark 7:1-4 says, “Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.” Jesus was in Galilee. This meant that these Pharisees and scribes had traveled about 75 or 80 miles in order to find some fault in Jesus. Here we see that their goal was to find something of which to accuse Jesus.

In their efforts to find some reason to accuse Jesus, these Pharisees and scribes noticed that the disciples of Jesus had broken what was called the tradition of the elders. After the captivity of Judah by Babylon, the Jews started adding their own interpretations to the law. These were not even written down at the time of the New Testament. These traditions were put into writing about 150 years after Christ and were called the Mishna. These oral traditions had become more important than the Old Testament law to the scribes and Pharisees. These were what they accused the disciples of breaking.

The only commandment of Moses about the washing of hands was in Leviticus 22:4-7 where we read, “Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who is a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean *by* a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen, or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be— the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the holy *offerings* unless he washes his body with water. And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the holy *offerings*, because it is his food.” Here we see that the only washing that was required of the priests was before they ate the meat of an animal offered as a sacrifice. As a result, the Pharisees could only accuse the disciples of breaking their traditions, which were not from the Scriptures.

When the Jews came from the marketplace, they said this ceremony of washing had to be done before a person ate any food. Someone had to pour water over the hands while the person held his hands with the fingers pointing toward heaven. The water had to drip off of the wrist. Once the water dripped off the wrist, more water had to be poured over the hands with the fingers pointing down. Finally, each hand had to be rubbed with the other fist. In addition to this tradition, we see that the scribes also had many other traditions about the proper way to wash cup, pitchers, copper containers and even couches. These traditions were more important to the scribes than the Law of Moses.

Mark 7:5-8 says, “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors

Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” We see that the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem asked Jesus why His disciples did not walk according to the tradition of the elders. They said that the disciples were eating bread with unwashed hands.

Instead of answering their question, Jesus answered them by pointing out that they were hypocrites. The word translated “hypocrite” means “*a stage player or a pretender*” because in that day one person would play many different parts in a play and would hold a different mask for each person that the actor played. Jesus used this word to speak of those who were spiritual phonies who did not have true belief in their hearts. Then Jesus quoted the words of the Greek translation of Isaiah 29:13. That verse says, “Therefore the Lord said: ‘Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.’” Isaiah said people would talk about God but have hearts filled with unbelief.

This verse described exactly what the Pharisees were doing. They spoke words from their lips that claimed to honor God. However, their hearts were filled with evil. Jesus later explained this to His disciples when He said in Mark 7:20-23, “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’” Jesus said that when the heart of a person is filled with evil that the evil in his heart is what defiles him and not a failure to wash the hands.

Jesus also pointed out that the worship of the Pharisees and scribes was “vain” which means “*worthless or fruitless*.” That was due to the fact that the traditions that they were teaching were the commandments of men instead of the commandments of God. Jesus said that they had laid aside the commandments of God. Instead, they were teaching the traditions of men as if they were commandments even when they were about things like washing pitchers or cups. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 warns us that we will have similar teachers in the last days. Those verses say, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” Often the goal of such teachers is described in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 where we read, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds* of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” These verses also described the goal of the scribes and Pharisees.

Mark 7:9-13 says, “He said to them, ‘*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, “He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.” But you say, “If a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban’—” (that is, a gift *to God*), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.’” Jesus then pointed out that the Pharisees and scribes specifically violated one of the Ten Commandments through their traditions. This was due to the fact that they were rejecting the Word of God.

Exodus 20:12 says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” This is the fifth commandment and the first of those that speak about our relationship to other people. Then Exodus 21:17 adds, “And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” Here God showed that the penalty for the disrespect of parents was death. However, the Pharisees and scribes had a tradition that allowed them to disrespect their parent by not helping out their parents when their parents were in need.

One tradition of the Pharisees and scribes was to avoid helping their parents in times of need by saying Corban. The word “Corban” means “*given to God or this is a gift to God.*” As a result, when parents were in need of money for food or other necessary things the Pharisees and scribes would say Corban. Then these men would tell their parents that they could not help them out in their time of need because they had dedicated their money and possessions to God. In this way the Pharisees kept all of their money for themselves and did nothing to help their parents. In fact, they even taught that it would be sinful to help their parents when that money had been dedicated to God. Here we see that their evil hearts drove them to keep their riches instead of respect their parents.

In contrast, Jesus said that they were actually making the Word of God of no effect by their traditions. The word translated “of no effect” means “*to make something useless or void and without any authority.*” Jesus then went on to say that the Pharisees and scribes had many similar traditions. That is why Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 to show that these religious leaders had a heart that was far from God even though they made it sound by their words that they were honoring God. That is also why Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand clearly that there can be religious leaders just like the Pharisees and scribes. Such individuals have replaced the Word of God with their own opinions because their hearts are far from God. We want to help our children learn to recognize and avoid such false teachers. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the hearts of false religious teachers.

Jesus Taught About the Heart of Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize those who are false teachers like the Pharisees and scribes whose hearts were far from God. In this topic, we will see that after Jesus left the large crowd of people He had been teaching, He explained this teaching about the heart to His disciples.

Mark 7:14-16 says, “When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” The disciples of Jesus had just been accused of breaking the traditions of the elders. Jesus had explained to the Pharisees and scribes what Isaiah said about the condition of their hearts. Here we see that Jesus now used that opportunity to explain to the whole crowd that the things that defile a person are the things that are in the heart of that person.

Jesus invited the crowd to hear Him and understand. The word translated “hear” means “*to consider so that there is understanding.*” The word translated “understand” means “*to bring things together in the mind so that there is clear understanding.*” Jesus wanted the people gathered there that day to really think about what He said so that there would be true understanding. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Here we see that true understanding of the Word of God must come from the Lord.

Jesus then went on to explain that it is not what comes from outside the body that defiles the body. The Pharisees and scribes had just complained about hands that had not been washed according to the traditions of the fathers. Here we see that Jesus made it clear that a little dust or dirt on the hands would not defile a person. Instead it is the things that come from within a person that defile a person. Proverbs 23:6-8 talks about the way that a man thinks in his heart. Those verses say, “Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words.” This is a warning not to eat with the greedy person who has evil in his heart. He only offers you his food so that he can increase his wealth at your expense. Such an attitude comes from the heart.

Jesus said that those who have ears to hear should hear. Later in John 14:26 Jesus told the disciples, “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.” It is also the desire of Christ for all Christians to hear with understanding so that we can serve Him from our hearts. One reason Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit is to help us have that understanding. That is why 1 Corinthians 2:13 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.” This verse shows us that it is the Holy Spirit that gives us understanding.

Mark 7:17-19 says, “When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, ‘Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?’” The disciples of

Jesus wanted Him to explain this parable to them after they had left the crowd. Here we see that the disciples did have a genuine desire to understand what Jesus was teaching. This is a real example for our own lives.

Jesus began His answer with a question, “Are you thus without understanding also?” Here we see that it was the desire of Jesus for His disciples to have full understanding. That is the same thing that He desires for all true followers. We see that Jesus explained something that is very important for us to understand. In these verses, we see that Jesus made it very clear what defiles a person. Defilement does not come from the outside. Instead, defilement comes from the heart. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Here we see that before the flood, it was the thoughts of the heart that defiled the people. That is exactly what Jesus wanted His disciples to understand because the same thing has been true ever since Adam and Eve sinned. It is the heart that defiles a person.

Jesus then explained to the disciples that food cannot defile a person. The reason that food cannot defile a person is the fact that food does not go to the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The heart is our inner man and what is in the heart will control the life. Luke 6:45 says, “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.” In this verse, we see that a mouth speaks out of the abundance of what is in the heart. Because of the sin of Adam, every person is born with a sin nature. David wrote in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” Here we see that David said he had a sin nature from the time he was conceived.

Jesus then explained what the heart of a person that has not yet repented of the sin of unbelief and come to God through Christ is like. Mark 7:20-23 says, “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’” From these verses we see that a sinful or evil heart will bear evil fruit.

In contrast, Jesus said in John 3:6-8, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” At the moment that we repent of our sin of unbelief and receive Christ by faith, we are born of the Holy Spirit and we are given a new nature. The desire of that new nature is to please God. Here we see that every Christian has new desires. However, Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Here we see that even though we now have a desire to do good, we will still do evil if we depend on our own strength.

Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” It is as we pray and yield our heart to the Lord that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do the things that are good and pleasing in the sight of God. With a new nature, we have a desire to do good; each time we yield to the Holy Spirit, we will have the power to do good. This is why the first part of Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good...” We see that a new heart gives us new desires. Then as we yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit we

see that He gives us the power to carry out those new desires.

Jesus taught one other lesson in these verses. Jesus said that whatever enters a man from the outside enters the stomach instead of the heart. Then it passes through the stomach and is eliminated. The word translated “purifying” means “*to cleanse or to make clean.*” It is the same word that is used twice in 1 John 1:7-9 where we read, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In 1 John, we see that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus had told the Pharisees and scribes a little earlier that their tradition of washing hands was useless because eating food with unwashed hands was not something that would defile a person. By making that statement, Jesus purified all foods. In Acts 10:12-15, the Lord taught Peter how to apply that lesson. Those verses say, “In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” Peter had to learn and understand that the Gospel was for all people and not just the Jews.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that Christ wants people of every kindred, tribe and nation to be in heaven. That is why He has called us to take the Gospel to all people. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand this important lesson.

Jesus Healed the Daughter of a Greek Woman

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that Jesus explained what the heart of man without Christ is like. We saw that such a heart is filled with evil. We also saw that a person receives a new heart through repentance and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then Jesus explained the foundation for the fact that the Gospel must be taken to all people.

In Mark 7:24-27 we read, “From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know *it*, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, ‘Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.’” Tyre and Sidon was an area where the people were Gentiles instead of Jews. Most of the people in that area had no true understanding about Jesus although it is clear from these verses that they had been hearing about Him.

We saw in Mark 6:30-31 that the disciples returned to Jesus after their ministry trip. Those verses say, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” We saw in the rest of the chapter that Jesus and the disciples had no opportunity to rest and discuss what had happened on their ministry trip. As a result, Jesus took the disciples to this Gentile area so that they could have time to rest and He could teach them important lessons from their ministry trip. However, one of the Greek women of that area had heard that Jesus had cast out many demons.

This woman had a daughter that was possessed with a demon. As a result, she came to the house where Jesus and the disciples were and fell at the feet of Jesus. Then she began begging him to cast the demon out of her daughter. Jesus knew that this woman had great faith. Jesus wanted His disciples to see and understand the faith of this Gentile woman so Jesus gave the woman a very unusual answer. Jesus told the woman, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” At first it sounded like Jesus was only concerned for the Jews as He said let the children be filled first. The Jews often referred to the Gentiles as dogs. However, Jesus used a different word than was usually used. This was the word for a little dog. The only places this word is used in the New Testament are in Matthew 15:26-27 and in these verses. Matthew wrote about this same woman and event so this was the only woman with whom Jesus used this word. This was the word that was used for a little dog that a family kept as a pet.

In both Matthew and Mark, the same word is used when the woman answered Jesus. Mark 7:28-30 says, “And she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.’ Then He said to her, ‘For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.” Here we see that the woman showed her faith by saying that the little dogs were allowed to eat the crumbs that the children dropped.

Matthew 15:28 says, “Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Here we see that

Jesus wanted to honor the faith of the woman. He wanted the disciples to understand that a Gentile could have great faith. As a result, the words of the woman gave Jesus the opportunity to point out the greatness of her faith to the disciples. Here we see that Jesus was preparing the disciples for the time when He would send them to take the Gospel to all people and not just to the Jews.

Jesus told the woman that the demon had gone out of her daughter. The woman then showed her faith in another way as she believed Jesus and stopped begging him to heal her daughter. Instead she immediately left to go to her house. When she arrived at her house, she saw that her faith had been rewarded. The demon was gone from her daughter and the daughter was lying on the bed. This is another of the miracles that Jesus performed without even going to the place where the person was. He showed again that He could heal just by speaking the word even though the needy person was not in the same area where Jesus was when He spoke.

Jesus had given the disciples a little time for rest and teaching by going to this area. Mark 7:31-34 says, "Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'" Once Jesus had shown the disciples that Gentiles could have great faith, Jesus then left that area and traveled east until he and the disciples were on the other side of the Jordan River. Then they traveled south toward the east side of the Sea of Galilee. This was the area known as Decapolis. These ten cities were considered a separate group of cities which had been greatly influenced by the Greek culture because many Greeks lived there. Since this was an area with a large Greek influence, it is possible that this man was also a Gentile.

In the area of these ten cities, some of the people brought a man to Jesus that was deaf and could not speak clearly. The people who brought this man to Jesus begged Jesus to heal the man. This was actually one of many people that Jesus healed in this area because Matthew 15:29-31 says, "Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw *the* mute speaking, *the* maimed made whole, *the* lame walking, and *the* blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." We see that Jesus took this man and those who had brought him away from the crowd so that He could speak to the man personally.

When they were away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers in the ears of the man. Then Jesus spat and touched his tongue. This was probably the way that Jesus showed this man what He was planning to do for him. Jesus wanted this man to know that He cared for the man and that He was going to heal him. We see that Jesus always had time to show His care and love for an individual. Then Jesus looked up to heaven. The word translated "sighed" means "*to give a sigh or a groan.*" Then Jesus spoke and said, "Ephphatha". This word means, "*Be opened*".

Mark 7:35-37 says, "Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'" We see that the healing of this man happened instantly and included both his ears and his speech. We read that his ears were "opened." This word means "*to open completely.*" This means that the man could hear clearly just like any person that had good hearing.

We also see that the thing which caused the man to speak with a speech impediment was healed. The word translated “impediment” means “*a bond, a band a string or a chain.*” This word is used in Luke 13:16 where we read, “So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” This woman had a back that was so bent that she could not even stand up straight. Christ said that this woman had been bound by Satan. Then in Philippians 1:13-14 Paul used this word twice to speak of his chains in Rome. Those verses say, “So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” In both places, and most of the other places this word is used, it speaks about something that holds a person in bondage. Jesus immediately set the tongue of this man free.

Jesus then told the man and those with him not to tell anyone. However, the more Jesus commanded them not to speak the more the people told others what had happened to this man. As a result, the verses quoted earlier from Matthew showed that many others brought people to Jesus that needed healing of various physical problems. This included “the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others.” As a result, the multitudes in this area were filled with amazement. They expressed their amazement by saying, “He has done all things well.” The word translated “well” means “*excellently, beautifully or well.*” The disciples realized that Jesus was doing things that caused the crowds to have great respect for Jesus. We see that they glorified the God of Israel. This is a further indication that most of these people were Gentiles.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children follow the example of Jesus and develop a great concern for people in other areas who do not yet know Christ. They will develop that concern as they see us show Christ’s concern for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children your concern for the salvation of others.

Jesus Fed the Four Thousand

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children develop a great concern for the spiritual needs of people that do not know Christ in other areas of the world. We will do that as we provide an example by our concern. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus showed His compassion to a large crowd who had not had anything to eat for three days.

Mark 8:1-3 says, “In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.’” We saw in our last topic that a large number of people came to Jesus bringing people for Jesus to heal. These people which included many Gentiles had many different physical problems. As we begin this chapter, we see that many of these people wanted to also learn what Jesus taught. They apparently had not planned to stay and hear Jesus teach and so they had not brought anything with them to eat. We see that they had stayed for three days to listen to Jesus teach even though they did not have food.

Jesus understood what hunger is like because Matthew 4:2 says, “And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.” As a result, Jesus called the disciples to Him and said, “I have compassion on the multitude.” Throughout His ministry we see that Jesus had compassion for the people. Sometimes this compassion was for their physical needs and sometimes for their spiritual needs. Matthew 9:36 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” That verse speaks of His compassion for the spiritual needs of the people. Here it was the physical need of hunger that caused Jesus to have compassion on the people.

Jesus then explained the reason why He did not want to send the people home with their hunger. He said that some would faint on the way home. The word translated “faint” means “*to grow weak, to grow weary or to become tired.*” This word is translated “weary” in Matthew 9:36 as seen in the previous paragraph. Here we see that Jesus did not want the people to become exhausted before they reached their homes. The second reason Jesus did not want to send the people away hungry was due to the fact that part of the people had traveled a long distance to come and hear Jesus teach; He knew that they had to travel that same long distance to return to their homes. Both reasons show that Jesus had a great concern for the physical needs of the people.

The disciples agreed with Jesus that the people had a need but the disciples had one question. Mark 8:4-5 says, “Then His disciples answered Him, ‘How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?’ He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’” When Jesus fed the five thousand, Philip had answered the question of Jesus about where to buy bread by saying in John 6:7, “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” In this verse, we see that Philip said that they did not have enough money to buy even a little bit of food for such a large crowd.

Mark 6:35-36 tells us what had happened before Jesus asked that question. Those verses say, “When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country

and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” We see that the disciples had told Jesus to send the people to the surrounding villages so that they could buy food for themselves. Here their question shows that the disciples saw a different problem when they asked, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?” The word translated “wilderness” means “*a deserted region where no one lives.*” This time there were no surrounding villages where the people would even be able to buy bread.

This caused the disciples to ask Jesus a second question. Matthew 15:33 shows that the disciples then asked a different question. That verse says, “Then His disciples said to Him, ‘Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?’” The disciples knew that there were no nearby villages where they could go and buy food for the people. The disciples were willing to go buy food if that was what Jesus wanted but they did not know where to go to get that food.

Instead of rebuking the disciples for failing to remember how Jesus had fed the five thousand, Jesus just asked one question. He just asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” Here we see that the disciples had come prepared. They had some bread for themselves so they did not have to worry about becoming weak before they got to a village where they could buy some bread. Jesus wanted to teach them to share what they had with others. 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.” This verse points out the fact that Christians are to be concerned about one another. However, it also makes it clear that we are to have this same concern for others who are not yet Christians. Christ wanted to help the disciples develop that concern.

Once the disciples had told Jesus how much bread they had, we see that Jesus then gave further instructions. Mark 8:6-9 says, “So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before *them*. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away.” In these verses, we see that in addition to the bread, the disciples also had a few small fish.

Jesus commanded all of the people to sit down on the ground. Jesus then gave thanks to the Father for the food and began to break the bread into pieces. Jesus gave the disciples the opportunity to participate. He gave the food to the disciples and told the disciples to take the food to the people. This reminds us of the fact that Jesus does the things that are impossible for us but then He gives us the privilege of having a part in His ministry by doing the things which He has equipped us to do. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” We have each been given a spiritual gift. If we have a serving gift, we are to use that gift to serve others with the ability that God supplies.

After Jesus blessed and broke the food, the disciples then began distributing the food to the people. They just continued to carry bread and fish to the people until everyone was satisfied. In fact, we see that all of the people were filled. Then the disciples gathered the food that remained and found that they had enough food to fill seven large baskets. The word translated “large baskets” meant very large baskets. That is the word used in Acts 9:25 where we read, “Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket.” In this verse we see that the baskets were large enough to hold Saul and make it possible for him to get out of Damascus when the disciples let him down in a basket to escape those who wanted

to kill him.

We see that Mark mentioned that there were four thousand who had eaten that day. Matthew 15:38 adds one other small detail. That verse says, “Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.” Here we see that there were four thousand men in addition to the women and children that were present there that day. This meant there were actually four thousand families that were fed. If there were about the same number of women as men, there were approximately four thousand women. If the families averaged two children per family, that would add about eight thousand more. As a result, the crowd that was present that day could easily have been sixteen thousand or more. It did not matter to Jesus how many people were there that day because He was able to feed all of them with the seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Christ can choose to meet any need and have enough to do it. By such miracles, Jesus was showing His disciples that He would meet their needs as they followed Him.

Jesus then sent the people away. This large group of people had been with Jesus for three days. That would have given Him time to teach them many things. Now the time had come for the people to go home and think about the things that they had heard and seen and not to stay around and hope that Jesus would give them more food. Jesus then left that area by boat and went to another area. Matthew 15:39 says, “And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.” This area (also called the region of Dalmanutha) was several miles south of Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that Jesus will supply their needs as they follow Jesus and serve Him. He is able to provide today just as He was able to provide during the time that He was here on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand this lesson.

Jesus Explained the Meaning of Leaven

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that Jesus is able to supply their needs as they serve Him just as He fed the four thousand in Mark. In this topic, we are going to see that the Pharisees again came to test Jesus and try to trap Him. Jesus later used this to explain an important lesson to the disciples.

We have seen that the Pharisees tried to test Jesus many times. In Mark 8:10-13, we see another of those attempts when Jesus came into the region of Dalmanutha. We see that the Pharisees came to Jesus and began a dispute with Him. The word translated “dispute” means “*to question, to examine together or to dispute.*” This same word is used in Acts 6:9 where we read, “Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.” In Acts, we see that a group of men tried to challenge the things that Stephen was teaching. This was similar to the attitude that the Pharisees had as they questioned Jesus. They did not want to learn from Jesus. Instead they wanted to argue with Him.

They also asked Jesus to give them a sign from heaven to prove that He was the Christ. A sign from heaven meant that they wanted Jesus to do some miracle that involved the sun, moon or stars. Jesus had done many miracles from the time that He had begun His public ministry. Jesus had earlier said in John 5:36, “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.” Jesus had pointed out that the miracles that He had done provided an even greater witness than the witness of John the Baptist that the Father had sent Him. The Pharisees had not believed then and their demand for a sign from heaven showed that they still refused to believe that Jesus came from the Father. We see that these Pharisees were really just trying to test Jesus.

We read that Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit. Then Jesus asked a question. His question was, “Why does this generation seek a sign?” The word translated “why” in this verse is translated “what”, “who”, “why”, “which” or other similar words a total of 538 times in the New Testament. It was really a question to make people think. The next place in this chapter where the word is used is Mark 8:17. That verse says, “But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, ‘Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?’” In that verse Jesus wanted to make the disciples think. In this verse, Jesus wanted to make the Pharisees think about the reason why they refused to believe in Him since He had already done many miracles.

As a result, Jesus told these Pharisees that they would not be given a sign. Jesus had already given the Pharisees plenty of evidence that He is God. Jesus described the Pharisees in Matthew 15:12-14 when He said, “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’” Jesus had said that the Pharisees were blind and that those who followed them were also blind and so it would have been useless to do another miracle because they would not believe. Then Jesus got into the boat and left that area.

While they were in the boat crossing the sea, Jesus took the opportunity to warn the disciples about the teaching of the Pharisees. Mark 8:14-16 says, “Now the disciples had forgotten to

take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, ‘Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘*It is* because we have no bread.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus began to teach His disciples but they misunderstood and thought that he was reminding them that they had not brought food with them. There was only one loaf of bread in the entire boat.

Jesus said as they crossed the sea, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” The disciples immediately began talking among themselves about the fact that they had failed to bring any bread with them. Normally, leaven is used in the dough when bread is baked. Here we see that the disciples heard the word “leaven” and immediately jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was reminding them that they had forgotten to take any bread. Many people do the same thing today. They hear one or two words and immediately think about something totally unrelated because they have not learned to be good listeners. Many conflicts would be avoided if people would take the time to listen before they started answering a question that had not been asked or trying to justify themselves when no one was accusing them of anything.

Leaven or yeast was usually put into bread to cause the bread to rise but Jesus also used the word many times to speak of the how the influence of hypocrites or false teachers can quickly spread. That is the way that Jesus was using the word here. Matthew 16:11-12 says, “‘How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” In Matthew, Jesus was talking about the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Here, Jesus was talking about the hypocrisy and false teaching of the Pharisees and of Herod.

That hypocrisy is illustrated in Luke 12:1 which says, “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first *of all*, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’” We saw in an earlier topic (on Mark 6:14-29) that Herod was a very immoral man. We also saw that He was willing to kill John the Baptist to try and keep the respect of the leading men of Galilee. As a result, leaven can be used to speak of the influence of a variety of different kinds of sin. That is why 1 Corinthians 5:6-7 says, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

Since the disciples did not understand, Jesus explained to them what He meant by leaven. Mark 8:17-21 says, “But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, ‘Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?’ They said to Him, ‘Twelve.’ ‘Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ So He said to them, ‘How *is it* you do not understand?’” Jesus explained their misunderstanding and then explained why they misunderstood.

First, Jesus explained that He was not rebuking them because they had forgotten to bring any bread. Second, He asked them a series of questions and also explained their lack of understanding. The first question was, “Do you not yet perceive nor understand?” Here Jesus answered this question with another question that pointed out the fact that their hearts were still hardened. Here we see that they lacked understanding of spiritual truth. That was due to the

fact that the Father had not yet given them the Holy Spirit to help them understand spiritual truth. 1 Corinthians 2:13 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.” The Spirit came on all Christians on the Day of Pentecost after the death, resurrection and return of Jesus to heaven.

Jesus went on to explain more about their lack of spiritual understanding. They had eyes that could see many things in the world around them but they lacked spiritual eyes that would help them to understand spiritual truth. They had ears that could hear the words that Jesus spoke but they lacked spiritual understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” We see that such things can only be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus then went on to point out things that the disciples were failing to remember. Jesus reminded the disciples of the time that He fed the five thousand with just five loaves. He then asked them how many baskets they had gathered up after He fed the entire crowd of people that day. The disciples quickly remembered that they had gathered up twelve baskets on that day. Then Jesus reminded them about the time that He fed the four thousand with seven loaves. He asked how many large baskets they had gathered up that time after everyone was filled with food. They replied that they had gathered up seven large baskets. Jesus pointed out that they could understand physical things but were failing to understand spiritual things. James later wrote in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” In this verse, we see that we need to pray for spiritual wisdom and understanding because it is the Lord who gives us those things.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of seeking spiritual wisdom and understanding from the Lord so that they will be able to help others effectively. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to depend on the Lord for wisdom and understanding.

Jesus Healed a Blind Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the importance of seeking spiritual wisdom and understanding from the Lord so that they will be able to effectively help others. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus healed a blind man in a somewhat unique way.

In Mark 8:22-23 we read, “Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.” We see that Jesus came to the town of Bethsaida. This was the town where at least three of the disciples of Jesus had grown up. John 1:44 says, “Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” However, this was also a town that consistently rejected the teaching of Jesus. That is why Jesus promised judgment to the people of Bethsaida in Matthew 11:21 and Luke 10:13. Luke 10:13 says, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.”

On this particular visit of Jesus to this city, we see that some of the people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch him. Because of the unbelief in this town, we see that Jesus led this man out of the town. At times, Jesus purposely healed a person out of the sight of those who were filled with unbelief. One illustration of this was when Jesus healed the daughter of Jairus. Mark 5:39-40 says, “When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying.” Jesus did not allow the mocking crowd to see the daughter healed. In the same way, Jesus did not allow the people of Bethsaida to see the healing of this blind man.

Once Jesus and the blind man were out of the town, we see that Jesus spit on the eyes of the blind man and then put His hands on the man. Jesus had done the same three things to the man that was deaf and had a speech impediment in the previous chapter. Mark 7:33-35 says, “And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.” Jesus also took him aside, touched him and spit on the part of the man that needed healing. Since Jesus took both of these people away from the crowd before healing them, these other actions let them know that Jesus did plan to heal them.

Jesus then asked this man if he saw anything. Mark 8:24-26 says, “And he looked up and said, ‘I see men like trees, walking.’ Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, ‘Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.’ Here we see that this man could see some things but he could not see clearly. Then Jesus put His hands on the eyes of the man again and made him look up. The word translated “look up” is used 26 times in the New Testament and is translated “to receive sight” 15 of those times. Mark 10:51 and 52 where this word is used twice says, “So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

This is the only time that we read that Jesus healed a person in two stages. The reason for this is not explained but it may be due to the fact that the man himself had not yet shown any faith. He had been brought by others to Jesus. Jesus had led him out of town, touched his eyes and asked if he saw anything. None of those actions required faith. However, we see that Jesus now asked him to respond before Jesus gave him clear vision. This gave him an opportunity to show that he believed that Jesus could completely heal him. Jesus put His hands on the eyes of the man a second time and told him to look up. In Numbers 21:9 we read, “So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” In this passage, we see that those who had faith and looked at the bronze serpent lived. Jesus gave this man the same simple instruction and just told him to look up.

As soon as he looked up, the sight of this man was fully restored and he saw everyone clearly. John 20:30-31 says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” This man believed the words of Jesus and looked up. This man believed Jesus and obeyed Him. At that very moment, the sight of the man was fully restored. The action of this man shows a very simple illustration of what it means to believe Jesus.

Jesus then gave the man some additional instructions. First, Jesus told the man to go to his home. Second, Jesus told him not to go into the town. Third, Jesus told the man to tell no one in the town. Apparently, the man followed all of these instructions because nothing more is said about him. This miracle is unusual because it was done in two stages. However, it is also an illustration of a man who followed the instructions of Jesus in every detail.

Jesus and His disciples then left that region and went to the city of Caesarea Philippi. That city was about 25 miles north of Bethsaida and was located near Mount Hermon. Mark 8:27-30 says, “Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ So they answered, ‘John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.” Jesus had plenty of time to talk with the disciples as they walked the 25 miles to Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus used this opportunity as they were walking along the road to ask the disciples some questions. The first question was, “Who do men say that I am?” This question gave the disciples the opportunity to tell about the opinions that others had expressed to them about Jesus. We see from the answers that the people had many different opinions about Jesus. Some of the people thought that He must be John the Baptist which meant that they thought that He had risen from the dead and come back to life after Herod had killed John the Baptist. These people thought that a great miracle had happened.

Other people had the opinion that Jesus must be Elijah. 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.” The people who thought that Jesus was Elijah were expecting God to send Elijah back to the earth before the coming of the Lord. These were people who were thinking about the promises of God regarding the future.

A third group of people just said that Jesus was one of the prophets. Throughout the past history of Israel, God had sent many prophets to the Jews to speak to the Jews for God. These people felt that Jesus was another prophet. Each of the groups that had these opinions were

looking forward to the fact that God was getting ready to fulfill some of the promises that had been made in the Old Testament about the future of Israel. However, none of these opinions showed that they fully understood who Jesus was. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John wrote this verse many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In this verse, John explained that the Word (Jesus) was God and revealed the glory of God. John then explained through the rest of the book that Jesus truly was the Son of God and One with the Father.

However, Jesus asked these questions of the disciples because He had one other question that He wanted to ask them and that was the most important question. Jesus then asked, "But who do you say that I am?" The disciples had given opinions about what other people had said about Jesus. However, this question gave the disciples the opportunity to explain who they thought that Jesus was. Peter answered this question and probably spoke for himself and for the rest of the disciples. Peter just said, "You are the Christ." The word "Christ" means "*the Anointed One or the Son of God.*" The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah. John 6:68-69 says, "But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus warned the disciples not to tell anyone else who He was. Jesus had to go to the cross, die and be raised again the third day before the disciples were to begin telling others that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. However, Jesus could now begin preparing the disciples for the time when that would happen. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Since Christ has now died and risen from the dead, that is the message we want to show them how to share with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message.

Jesus Began to Teach About His Coming Death

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone about who He was as they walked on the road to Caesarea Philippi. We will see in this topic the reason that Jesus had asked the disciples who He was and then told them not to tell anyone at that time.

Once the disciples understood that Jesus is the Christ, it was then possible for Him to begin to teach them about His coming death and resurrection. Mark 8:31-33 says, “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” We see that Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must suffer many things.

The Old Testament had predicted that Jesus would suffer many things. Isaiah 53:3 says, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” This verse and many others in the Old Testament had predicted the rejection and sufferings of Jesus. Before He even reached the cross Jesus had been scourged, crowned with thorns and mocked. This suffering had been at the hands of both the Jews and the Gentiles before He was condemned to die on the cross.

The Old Testament had also predicted that Jesus would be rejected. Psalm 118:22-23 says, “The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes.” Here in Mark we see that Jesus began to tell the disciples that He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and scribes. Mark 14:63-65 says, “Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophesy!’ And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.” These things all happened before the chief priests even took Jesus to Pilate.

Then the Jewish religious leaders delivered Jesus to Pilate. Mark 15:12-15 says, “Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do *with Him* whom you call the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.” Here we see that Pilate became a partner with the Jews as he chose to please the crowd by condemning Jesus to be crucified.

However, Jesus also promised the disciples that after three days He would rise again. Although Jesus mentioned His coming resurrection several times, the disciples did not really hear Him because they were expecting Him to chase out the Romans and become the king. After His resurrection, Luke 24:10-11 says, “It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” Here we see that when the disciples heard about the resurrection that they did not believe. Instead they thought that the women

were talking nonsense.

Jesus spoke openly to the disciples about His coming death and resurrection. We see that Peter was so upset that he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him. The word translated “rebuked” means “*to admonish or charge sharply.*” This attitude shows us that Peter did not want to even hear what was going to happen to Jesus and he told Jesus that with strong words. Jesus then turned around so that all of the disciples as well as Peter could hear what Jesus said. We see that Jesus gave Peter a very strong rebuke because Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan!” Peter had allowed Satan to so deceive his thoughts that he spoke without ever considering the will of God.

Jesus then told Peter, “For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Here we see that it is possible for a follower of Jesus to be used by Satan to speak the thoughts of the world instead of speaking and explaining the will of God. That is why it is so important for us to learn to speak the Word of God instead of giving our own opinions. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will make clear the will of God while Satan will deceive us by our own opinions so that we seek to please the world instead of speak the will of God.

After Jesus spoke only to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection, we see that He returned from Caesarea Philippi to speak to all of the people again. Mark 8:34-38 says, “When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. 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? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’” We see that Jesus told the people what it means to be His disciple.

Jesus said that a true disciple is one who makes three life changing choices. First, a true disciple makes the choice to deny self. To deny self means to forget one’s self and stop seeking his own self-interest. Second, a true disciple makes the choice to take up his cross. The word “cross” means “*an upright stake or a pointed stake*”. Throughout the New Testament, this word is used to speak of the cross on which Jesus suffered and died as He paid the penalty for our sins so that we could be set free from that sin. As a result, we see that this goes even further than the choice to forget self. It means to die to self. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Here we see that Paul made the choice to die to self and his own desires.

Third, a true disciple makes the choice to follow Christ. There are many things that a person can follow in the world. These include things like money, pleasure, fame, sports or many other things. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” These verses explain what it means to follow Christ. Here we see that a person either lives for self or lives for Christ, the One who died for our sins and rose again. He is the One who gives purpose and meaning to our lives.

A person who seeks to save his life by gathering the things of this world will find at the end of

his life that he has nothing. At the end of his life, a person who has gained the things of this world will have nothing to take with him to eternity. 2 Peter 3:10 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Here we see that the earth and its works will all be burned. In contrast, 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." These verses show how to have eternal treasures.

Jesus went on to explain to the disciples that a person has gained nothing if he gains all of the things that people seek in the world and loses his own soul. The soul includes the mind, emotions and will. Mark 8:36-37 show an even more serious consequence than the loss of the things that people follow because the will of a person has rejected Christ. We see that those who choose to follow the things of this world instead of choosing to follow Jesus will experience eternal loss. That eternal loss is described in Revelation 20:12-15 where we read, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Here we see that the eternal loss includes eternal separation from God in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Those who are ashamed of Jesus and reject His words are those who have chosen to live to please themselves and fail to repent of their sin of unbelief because they continue to choose their sinful lifestyle. Jesus said that He will reject all those who have made that choice. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain to others this choice that all people face. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to clearly explain this choice.