

Bible Study # 31
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 4:12—9:17; Mark 1:14—2:22; Luke 4:14—5:39; John 2:13—4:54

This evening we are continuing our survey of the Gospels and Acts. We are near the beginning portion of that. What we **are covering this evening has to do with the events in the life of Christ from the time of the Passover of 28 A.D. until the Passover of 29 A.D.**

Christ began His public ministry in the fall of 27 A.D., the time of His baptism by John the Baptist. John was preaching by the River Jordan. Jesus appeared there, was baptized by John and was pointed out by John to the multitudes.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus and some of His disciples left. They went back to Cana of Galilee where His first public miracle was performed—the turning of the water into wine at the wedding feast. A short time after (we are not told exactly how long) Christ left and went into the wilderness. He was gone for a considerable period of time. He spent 40 days in fasting and prayer. At the end of that time, He was tempted by Satan the devil. Remember the account of the temptation that occurred? It was very shortly after that incident, as we approach the beginning of the spring of 28 A.D., where we pick up the story this evening.

Jesus publicly began His ministry by suddenly appearing in the temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover season of 28 A.D. The first six months of His ministry were used for private teaching. During that time, He was baptized and made initial contact with His disciples. I might bring out that some of Christ's disciples had known Him and He had known them going all the way back to childhood because, in several cases, they were actually cousins of His.

It is made plain, for instance, that James and John (who were brothers) were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We find that James and John were first cousins of Jesus. There is another mentioned, James, the son of Alphaeus. It is mentioned that his mother, as well, was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. There were several of the disciples that He had undoubtedly known all the way back to childhood.

There were others that He had previously had contact with. Andrew (Peter's brother) and

several others had been with John the Baptist. John the Baptist had accumulated quite a number of disciples. A "disciple" is simply "a learner, a student, someone who is seeking to learn the lessons that someone else is teaching." We are given the example, for instance, that Andrew, the brother of Peter, was there with John the Baptist. He had spent at least a certain amount of time there. John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Messiah to Andrew and acknowledged Him as such when He came to be baptized.

What we have, as we will find a little bit later, is Jesus coming where Peter and Andrew were and saying, 'Come and follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' This was not an occasion such as is portrayed in one of the movies, where He comes by and kind of transfixes these two fellows with this hypnotic stare. Then they get this kind of blank look on their faces, drop their nets and just kind of walk out as though they were hypnotized. That was not the situation at all.

These were people who had known Him, had known of Him, were familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist and had some initial contact with Him. Some of those who were there with John the Baptist followed Him back to Cana of Galilee. Some saw that miracle of turning water into wine and returned to their business. They had their own lives; they had their own businesses. For the most part, they were self-employed. They had taken some time off and had spent time there listening to John the Baptist. They had spent some time there as disciples of his.

There came a point, right here at the beginning of this material that we are going to go through this evening, where Jesus told some of them, 'I want you to come and follow Me full time.' They knew who He was and believed that He was the Messiah. They didn't fully understand the role of the Messiah. They were expecting that He would restore the Kingdom to Israel right away. The disciples came out of a variety of backgrounds.

As we pick up the story this evening, Jesus begins His public ministry during the Feast of Unleavened Bread of 28 A.D. We find that immediately prior to Passover, Jesus came to Jerusalem and He showed up at the temple. Now what is the temple called in Scripture? How did Jesus refer to the temple?

John 2:16, He referred to it as, "His Father's house."

What do you do with your house immediately prior to Passover and the Days of Unleavened

Bread? You clean it up, don't you? What did He do to His Father's house right before Passover? He cleaned it up; He unleavened it in the spiritual sense. There is a reason as to why Jesus began His ministry this way.

John 2:13-16, "Now the Jews' Passover was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money-exchangers stationed around. Then, after making a scourge of cords, He drove out every one of them from the temple, including the sheep and the oxen; He poured out the coins and threw over the tables of the money-exchangers. And He said to those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Do not make the house of My Father a house of merchandise!'"

Let me call your attention to a prophecy in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 3:1-2, "'Behold, I send My messenger, and he [John the Baptist] 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. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.'"

You know what refiner's fire and fullers' soap do, don't you? A refiner's fire is what you use to refine metal so you can skim off the dross. A fullers' soap will take the dirt, the hide and anything else off of you. It's kind of like "Eagle Eye." Some of you remember old "Eagle Eye" soap. That's about what you are looking at. Pretty strong stuff! It will take anything out—and that's what it says Christ's coming was like. He was going to show up and He was going to clean house—and that's what we find here.

Some of those in the temple had come up with a real gimmick to make a little money on the side. If you came to the temple, you were supposed to offer a sacrifice. That's why the people would come there to the temple. They would offer sheep, goats, doves and various things. Where were you going to get them? If you didn't live right there in Jerusalem, you would have to buy them. You weren't going to drive your sheep hundreds of miles from some far away place. Jews were coming there from all over making pilgrimages. Plus, you not only had to offer the animal, but the animal that you offered had to be approved by the priest as being without spot or blemish—a perfect specimen.

Some had come up with the idea that there was a lot of money to be made in selling these animals for sacrifice. What they did was sublet the concession to sell animals there in the temple. In fact, 'If you don't buy one of my animals, if we look long and hard enough, we can find some kind of spot or blemish on yours. We can find something wrong with it, and it won't do. That one has dirt under its hoof; you can't offer that one. You have to get one of these over here.'

They had a real gimmick going. They had turned it into a real moneymaking thing. You had to buy the animal from them. And you can bet their prices were higher than what you'd pay out of town. Not only that, but they had come up with another deal. They said, 'This money people come in here to spend, that's pagan money. It has pagan inscriptions; it has the picture of the Roman emperor who proclaims himself as god [It was just regular money of the Roman Empire.]. Being that's pagan money, we can't put that pagan money into the temple treasury. Tell you what we are going to do—we are going to have some money exchange. We are going to have our own money. This will be good, righteous money. And you can only spend it right here in the temple. Now, we will sell you our money that you can put into the temple treasury, and you can buy these sheep and goats in here. If you want to make an offering, you have to use our money; we won't accept this pagan Roman money. You give it to me and I will exchange it.'

They considered the money too pagan to put into the temple treasury, but not too pagan to put into their pockets. They really had a deal going—a real moneymaking operation—and some of the priests were getting a "rake" of it. They were subletting all this stuff. All of it was contrary to the law, but after all, who was enforcing the law? They were! There's nothing new under the sun. We also have seen plenty of approaches by those who were supposed to be enforcing the law around here over the years.

This was the situation: Jesus showed up and cleaned house. 'Get this stuff out of here!'

Matthew 21:13, says, "... 'It has been written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer [for all nations].' But you have made it a den of thieves!'"

Tables were flying, coins went scattering and sheep and goats started taking off for the gate. Jesus came here and He did this—and it really stirred things up. They said, 'Who do You think You are, doing this?' If you will notice, nobody tried to arrest Him.

John 3:1-2, in fact, in just a matter of a few days later, “There was a man of the Pharisees, whose name was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi [Teacher], we realize and can tell You are a Teacher who has come from God [a Teacher sent by God], because no one is capable of doing these miracles which You are doing, unless God be with Him.’”

Jesus came and He performed certain miracles. Very clearly, God’s stamp of approval was there. The religious leaders did not like it. They resented it, but they knew that He was not just somebody that showed up on His own authority. They considered Him at the least a teacher from God or a prophet because of the miracles that He worked.

Verse 3, “Jesus answered and said to him [Nicodemus], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!’” Nicodemus was very puzzled by this. He thought this was a very unusual way to open a conversation. He said, ‘That doesn’t make sense.’

Verse 4, “Nicodemus asked Him, ‘How can it be possible for a man to be born when he is old? Is he able to enter a second time into the womb of his mother, and be born?’”

Nicodemus understood the meaning of the term “born again” and because he understood the meaning of the words, he scratched his head and he said, ‘It doesn’t make any sense.’

Verse 6, Jesus then went on to explain, “That which has been born of the flesh is flesh; but that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Verse 5, “...‘except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!’”

What are we told in 1 Corinthians 15?

1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul tells us, “...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; ...”

Verse 53, a little bit later he says, “...this mortal must put on immortality.”

“That which has been born of the flesh is flesh.”

Every one of us has been born of the flesh and we are flesh. If you don’t think so, just take the hatpin test. Stick your finger and see if you don’t bleed or if you don’t hurt. You’re flesh! You and I right now are flesh and blood. We have been born of the flesh.

Paul explains that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is eternal; it is going to last forever. What good is something that is going to last forever do for me in the state I am right now? I am going to get old,

deteriorate and I am going to die. A few years will go by and I will be gone, and this eternal inheritance will still be there. The only way that an eternal inheritance is going to do us any good is if we are transformed from flesh and blood that deteriorates, decays, grows old and eventually dies. We must be transformed from mortal to immortal. That’s what Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [We’re not all going to die because Christ is going to come back when some are still living.], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, ...”

Paul says when Christ descends, that is all going to take place.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Try rising up right now and see how far you rise. You may stand up out of your chair, but that’s about as far as you get. You can jump and you come right back down. You clear the ground a few inches and that will be it. But that’s not going to be the state of things when we are changed, when we are transformed.

John 3:6, “That which has been born of the flesh is flesh; but that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.” Jesus explained that to Nicodemus.

John 3:3, “...except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The miracles showed that Jesus was sent from God, and even the Pharisees recognized that. The miracles were a sign that God used to authenticate the genuineness of Jesus. Jesus went on and explained the matter of being born again. It’s not simply an emotion or feeling. It’s a rebirth, a birth into the spiritual realm just as we have been born into the physical realm. If we are going to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God, we are going to have to be born again, born a second time, not of a human mother, not into the physical realm of a physical flesh and blood human being, but born again—born of the Spirit as a born again son of God.

Notice a little bit later what Jesus taught about going to heaven.

John 3:12-13, “If I tell you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I

should tell you heavenly things? (And no one has ever gone up into heaven, except He who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.)” John added that latter part as a parenthetical statement. John is, of course, writing the account maybe sixty years after it occurred. John adds in parenthetically, “And no one has gone up into heaven except He who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.” In other words, Jesus Christ came down from heaven and has ascended up to heaven and He is up there right now. John added that in to modify Christ’s statement because Jesus said, “No one has ever gone up into heaven.” That’s true, except, obviously, for Jesus Himself who came down from heaven and is right now in heaven.

People talk about “when we all get to heaven.” According to John 3:13, no one has gone up into heaven. Peter explained a little later in Acts 2:29, 34 that David wasn’t in heaven and in Acts 13:22, David was a man after God’s own heart. In fact, Jesus said, “no man has gone up into heaven,” and it shows how opposite what most people think is in the Bible and what it really says. People think they get their religion out of the Bible, and when they start reading the Bible, what the Bible says is a lot different than what most people think it says. They think, ‘If the Bible says anything, it certainly says, “If you are good, you will go to heaven.”’

In John 2 and 3, Jesus’ message at that time was the message about Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. What did Jesus teach? The first thing He did was clean out the temple. He was teaching by example what it means to unleaven—to clean out, to get rid of sin, to get rid of that which pollutes or taints.

John 3:16, then He proceeded and He began to talk about how, “...God so loved the world that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life!” Isn’t that the message of Passover? Jesus expounded, at that season, the message surrounding Passover.

Then, verse 22, we find that Jesus Himself left Jerusalem; He came into the area of Judea outside Jerusalem and stayed there baptizing. His disciples were the ones actually baptizing; this is made plain a little bit later.

John 4:1-2, “Therefore, when the Lord realized the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although, in fact, Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were)...” Jesus did

not personally baptize anyone. He had His disciples do that, I think, for obvious reasons. What would be the tendency of people later on? If they had been baptized by Jesus personally, the tendency would be to feel like, ‘My baptism is obviously better than yours because Jesus Himself baptized me, and you were only baptized by one of the disciples. Mine is kind of “one step up”.’

There were things He simply chose not to personally do. Since He couldn’t do it for everyone, He just had His disciples do it. It does express it in John 3:22 as though He was baptizing, but John 4:2 explains technically He was not personally doing it—His disciples were doing it. That shows that Christ’s disciples’ baptisms were counted as though He Himself were doing it. In other words, when we come to those who are Christ’s representatives, it is Christ working through them. Christ was working through the disciples, through His representatives; it was as though He Himself was doing it, even though He was not literally, physically present and doing so.

We might notice as we come down through scripture that this was prior to John’s being cast into prison.

Verse 3, “Then He left Judaea, and went again into Galilee.” If you look at a map, Judea is in the south, Samaria is in the middle and Galilee is at the top. Galilee is the area where Jesus grew up. It’s where the city of Nazareth is located, as well as the city of Capernaum and others.

There were two ways of going to Galilee. The Jews normally took the long way and went around because they did not like to go through Samaria. The Jews really looked down on the Samaritans in a “big way.” We discussed some things about the Samaritans at the end of our survey of the Old Testament; you can understand why there was a lot of antagonism. The Jews really looked down on the Samaritans as just “lower than dirt.” They didn’t want to associate with them, talk with them or even walk through their country if they could help it. But Jesus was not that way.

Verse 4, “But it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria.” It was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria because He was on His way back to Galilee and He wanted to get there. We are going to see that He was on His way back and wanted to be back in Nazareth in time for the day of Pentecost—for the service there. It was immediately prior to Pentecost as He came

through Samaria. This was the most direct route. It only took a few days to go that way.

Verses 5-6, they came through and came to the city of Sychar. Jacob's well was located there.

Verses 7-8, "A woman then came out of Samaria to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink': Because His disciples had gone away into the city so they might purchase some food." The Samaritan woman was shocked.

Verse 9, "Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'Why do you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, to give You a drink? because the Jews have nothing whatsoever to do with the Samaritans.'" 'Hey, Jews don't want anything to do with Samaritans.' She was really surprised that He would ask her to do Him a favor—'Please give Me a drink of water.'

Verse 10, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you had really known the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, "Give Me a drink;" you would have asked Him to give you a drink, and He would have given you living water!'" That didn't make a whole lot of sense to her.

Verse 11, "The woman said to Him, 'You have nothing with which to draw out the water, and the well is deep; where then did You get the living water?'" 'What is this living water? You don't have anything to draw with. The well is deep. How are you going to get any water?'

Jesus continued, verses 13-14, and He began to expound to her about the Holy Spirit, which is the rivers of living water to which He had made reference.

Verse 16, then He told her, "...Go, call your husband, and come here."

Verses 17-18, "The woman answered and said, 'I do not have a husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You have answered correctly by saying you do not have a husband. Because you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband: this much you have truly spoken.'" She kind of stammered around a little bit and said, 'Well, you see, I am not married.' Jesus smiled and said 'You're right; you are not. You have had five husbands and the one you are living with now is not your husband. You have said the truth—you are not married.'

Verse 19, about this time, "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.'" She said, 'Somehow, You know something about me that I didn't tell You, something I had not planned on bringing up. This was not what I had in mind. Suffice it to say that I wasn't married, but now You press for details. You are right—I have had five husbands and I am living with

somebody right now.' She said, 'I think You must be a prophet. Now let's change the subject here from my marriages and my husbands. Why don't we kind of change the subject; we are getting a little bit personal here. I just as soon not discuss the subject of my marriages. Tell You what—let me ask You a Bible question. There is this Bible question that I have really been wondering about.'

Verse 20, "'Our ancestors worshiped in this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], but you Jews claim that Jerusalem is the only place where it has been ordained for people to worship.'" She said, 'I have always wondered and wanted to know: where is the place that men ought to worship?' Now, don't you know, that was really the primary thing on her mind for a long time; obviously, she was a very "devout" woman, right? Human nature hasn't changed. Someone is put on the spot and immediately they start looking to see if there isn't some way to change the subject.

Verses 21-22, "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the time is coming, when you shall worship the Father neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem! You Samaritans do not even know what you are worshiping! We Jews know what we are worshiping, because salvation is of the Jews.'" Jesus clearly shows that the Samaritans and the religious tradition that they had preserved were in error. We should not look to the Samaritans or to the text of Scripture that the Samaritans preserved as some kind of an authoritative guide.

Jesus made plain that the Jews were the ones that had preserved what was necessary (Romans 3:1-2). Salvation is of the Jews. They had preserved the correct information.

In verses 23-24, He went on to explain that God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. What is Jesus doing? He is expounding the message of Pentecost—the message of God's Spirit and the rivers of living water, worshiping God in spirit and in truth.

You can prove the time setting was immediately prior to Pentecost because of a statement a little bit later on.

Verses 31-33, "But in the meantime the disciples asked Him, 'Master, will you eat?' But He told them, 'I have food to eat which you know nothing about.' Therefore the disciples questioned one another, 'Did anyone bring Him something to eat?'" In their minds they always took everything in a very literal, physical way.

Verse 34, Jesus said, "...My food is that I should do the will of Him who has sent Me, and that I should finish His work.'" "You guys were hungry and the only thing you could think of was going into town and getting something to eat. That's what was primarily on your mind. What was primarily on My mind was doing the work."

Verse 35, "Didn't you say that it is yet four months, then the harvest comes? Listen, I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields; because they are already white for harvesting."

The harvest would have been at the beginning of the seventh month. That was the time of the great fall harvest. Four months earlier would have been at the beginning of the third month. Since Pentecost always comes in the first week of the third month, we are four months prior to the fall festival season, the fall harvest season. This would then put us in the late spring, the time of Pentecost—and that was Christ's message here.

Verse 43, "But after the two days He left there, and went to Galilee."

Verses 45-46, "Then when He came into Galilee, the Galileans accepted Him, because they had seen everything He had done in Jerusalem during the Feast of Unleavened Bread: because they also had gone to the Feast. Now Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, the same place where He made the water wine. And there was a certain courtier of the king, whose son was sick in Capernaum."

Now we are going to switch over to Luke 4, which picks up the account.

Luke 4:16, "And He came to Nazareth [which is there in Galilee], where He had been brought up: and according to His custom and habit, He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." This certainly shows Christ's custom regarding the Sabbath. What was His custom? Well, He went into the synagogue. He assembled with God's people. This particular expression that is translated "the Sabbath day" is more literally translated from the Greek, "the day of the Sabbaths." "Sabbaths" is plural; the "day of Sabbaths" or "the day of Weeks" was the Jewish name for Pentecost. Actually, it was an annual Sabbath.

He stood up and read this portion of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2; 49:8-9), which was a section of Scripture that was normally read at that time by the Jews as it is recorded here in Luke 4.

Verses 18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent Me to heal those broken in heart and spirit, to proclaim

deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away the crushed and oppressed with liberty, to proclaim an acceptable year of the Lord."

Now this was the year of 28 A.D.; 29 A.D. was a Jubilee year in the Jubilee cycle. In that sense, it was literally this special year, this acceptable year of the Lord, which was looked forward to. It was prophetic of Christ and His ministry, His proclamation of liberty, because that's what the Jubilee was physically in Israel anciently. It was the time when liberty was proclaimed throughout the land. Well, Jesus came to proclaim true liberty, and there was an outcry. People got upset because of this attitude: 'Who do You think You are? Why we have known You since You were a little kid. Why we know Your mother, Your father and Your brothers and sisters. Who do you think You are?'

Verse 24, Jesus said, "...no prophet is acceptable in his own country." That's the tendency of people, 'How can you be anything important? I have known you for years. Therefore, that kind of automatically means that you can't be anything very important because I know you.' That's the way people think. The crowd got very upset. Kind of a big mob scene developed, and He just passed through the middle of the crowd and got away.

Jesus goes to Capernaum: Luke 4:31-32 and Matthew 4:13-17.

He came down to Capernaum and taught them on the Sabbath; they were astounded at His doctrine because His message and His preaching were with authority.

We are told in Matthew 4:13 that He left Nazareth and He came and lived in Capernaum. We will notice a little bit later the fact that He refers to a specific house, a specific home. Jesus came to Capernaum, and following that Pentecost, He began to proclaim and to preach there.

Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to proclaim and preach, 'Repent: because the kingdom of heaven is drawing near!'"

Jesus calls the disciples: Mark 1:16-20, Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11.

In Mark 1:16-17 and Matthew 4:18-19, we find the account of His walking here by the Sea of Galilee, seeing Simon and Andrew and telling them, 'Follow Me; I am going to make you fishers of men.'

Then, in Mark 1:19-20 and Matthew 4:21-22, a little later He saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they left and followed Him.

Luke 5:10 makes plain that James and John were partners with Simon and Andrew. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. James and John were first cousins to Jesus. These were men who had known Him, had known things about Him, had known the uniqueness of Him, had seen certain of these things and had spent periods of time with Him in the past. They had been with Him on certain occasions such as the wedding feast at Cana. Now He comes and says, 'I want you to quit what you're doing and come and follow Me because I have a job for you.' They knew who He was and they were prepared to make that commitment at that time.

Jesus casts out demons: Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:33-37.

Mark 1:21-27, Christ enters into the synagogue in Capernaum and heals the man with the demon.

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law: Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39 and Matthew 8:14-15.

Mark 1:29-31, "And soon after leaving the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. And Simon's [Peter's] mother-in-law was lying in bed sick with a fever, and immediately they spoke to Him concerning her. And He came to her, and took her by her hand, and lifted her up. Then the fever immediately left her, and she served them."

The Catholics teach that Peter was the first Pope, but he was not. It makes it very plain here that he was married. He had a mother-in-law. How can you have a mother-in-law if you are not married? Christ healed her.

After the Sabbath, Jesus heals many: Mark 1:32-34, Luke 4:40-41 and Matthew 8:16-17.

Mark 1:32-34, "Then when evening came (when the Sabbath ended), they brought to Him all who were diseased, and those who were possessed by demons. And the entire city was assembled together at the door. So He healed many that were sick with various diseases, and He cast out many demons. But He didn't allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him." His fame spread far and wide as a result of these things. It's in this context of time that we come to what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5, 6, 7 and Luke 6:20-49.

In reality, the Sermon on the Mount was really more of a private teaching to the disciples.

Matthew 5:1-2, it is made plain, "But seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain: and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth, and taught them, ..." What is called the Sermon on the Mount is really

more of a private teaching, as He was seated there on a mountain with His disciples gathered around Him in a small group. He was teaching them.

What is called the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5, 6 and 7) is essential in terms of understanding what the New Covenant is all about. When God made the Old Covenant with ancient Israel, Moses stood on the mountain and gave to those who had accepted the Old Covenant (which was based on the Ten Commandments) the statutes and judgments (Exodus 21, 22, 23). The statutes and judgments were the application of the principles of the Ten Commandments to a physical people and to physical circumstances. It was the physical application of the principles of the law to a civil nation. That was the basis of the Old Covenant. Jesus in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 gives the basis of the New Covenant, the application of the spiritual principles of the Ten Commandments to a spiritual people.

He begins to teach, starting out by showing what real happiness is and where real blessings come from. The word "blessings" here is the Greek word "*makarios*," which can also be rendered "happy." People grasp after happiness; they search for happiness. They are looking for and pursuing happiness, but Jesus explains that what really leads to happiness and blessings is an attitude, a state of mind—a state of mind of being totally yielded to God, of having God's perspective, of recognizing your dependence on God, of recognizing and really desiring God's way, of being yielded and surrendered to God. That's what really brings happiness. When you are completely yielded and surrendered to God, there is a peace and a happiness that is produced.

Jesus makes plain in Matthew 5:17 that He didn't come to abolish or to destroy the law. People think Christ came to do away with the law. But Christ says, 'Don't think that I've come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.' So, people immediately think the law's done away. Where do they get that? Jesus said, 'Don't think I have come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill.' —To fill it up to the full!

Isaiah 42:21, "...He will magnify the law and make it honorable."

Matthew 5:20, "...that except your righteousness shall exceed and be above and beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way that you shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." The scribes and Pharisees lived in

outward conformity to the law. It is not simply to conform to the law. You have to be transformed and renewed in the way you think, on the inside. It is not enough to simply go through the motions of outward obedience. There needs to be a changed heart and mind to accompany it. We have to conform inwardly, as well as outwardly. Jesus then continues and He begins to expand and amplify. He illustrates the principles of the law. Notice here as we go through.

Matthew 5:21, I will just call your attention to, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients,”

Verse 22, “But I tell you,”

Verse 27, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ...”

Verse 28, “But I tell you,”

Verse 31, “It was also said,”

Verse 34, “But I say to you, ...”

Verse 38, “You have heard that it was said, ...”

Verse 44, “But I say to you, ...”

Christ goes through and picks out six principles that He says, ‘This is what you have always understood; this is what has been taught, but I am telling you, I am amplifying and magnifying.’

Matthew 5:21-22, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not commit murder;’ but whosoever shall commit murder shall be subject to the judgment. But I tell you, that everyone who is even superficially angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment. You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘Whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be in danger of the council;’ but I tell you, ‘Whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna.’”

The first thing He addressed was the matter of violence, anger, resentment and hostility to others. He expounded the commandment on murder. He said, ‘You have heard that you are simply not to kill; you are not to do violence to your neighbor; but I am telling you that is not enough.’ It is not enough to simply refrain from picking up a gun and “blowing him away.” You can’t hold this attitude of hostility or resentment. You can’t hold on to resentment.

Verses 23-24, “Therefore if you are going to offer your gift at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go away. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” You have to be willing to make amends; you can’t hold on to those resentments and hostility. You can’t carry that around because the magnification of the

commandment on murder says you don’t harbor the spirit of murder. A lot of people don’t commit murder simply for the reason they are scared of getting caught. They don’t want to go to prison. They have better things to do. Because they are afraid they will get caught, they don’t do it. God wants something that goes beyond just being scared of getting caught. He wants us to come to have an attitude like He has.

Verses 27-28, then Christ continued and said, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not commit adultery;’ But I tell you, that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” ‘You are not supposed to commit adultery. You thought that simply meant that while you are married to this woman, you are not supposed to go out with another woman. Well, I am telling you that it is not enough. It involves the whole attitude of lust. You don’t let something get in your way of obedience to Me.’

Then He went on even further concerning the matter of divorce.

Verses 31-32, “It was also said, ‘Whoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a decree of divorcement.’ But I say to you, whoever shall divorce his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever shall marry her who has been divorced, commits adultery.”

‘You thought it was a simple matter that if you wanted to get rid of your wife, you just give her a writing of divorcement, and that’s all there was to it. That’s what the scribes have told you, but I am telling you that if you do that (He is speaking here to His disciples.) except for the cause of sexual immorality (Greek, “*porneia*,” “gross immorality”), you cause her to commit adultery.’ Christ showed here that, in terms of His disciples, those who were His followers, the matter of divorce and remarriage was not something that He permitted. He didn’t permit His disciples to put away their mates.

Now Paul clarified the situation in 1 Corinthians 7 dealing with the Corinthians, where the question arose: what about circumstances that happened before you came into the knowledge of the truth? What happens about circumstances in your past before you became Christ’s disciple?

1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Paul explained, that in a case like that, “every man abides in the situation where he is called.” You can’t go back and start ten years ago. You start where you are when you come into the knowledge of the truth. Christ is speaking to those who knew the truth, those who

were His disciples. He said, ‘This kind of stuff that you’ve heard and you’ve done—that “won’t wash.” That is not what I intended from the beginning.’

Matthew 5:33-34, “‘Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, “You shall not perjure yourself [swear], but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, swear not at all: ...” ‘You’ve heard that you ought to perform your oath. I am telling you that this is not enough. You shouldn’t even be swearing because, by the very fact of swearing, you are making a distinction that, “Boy, I am really telling the truth this time.” Well, if you have to make such a big deal that you are telling the truth, what are you doing the rest of the time?’

Verse 37, Christ said, “‘...let your communication be “Yes,” “Yes;” “No,” “No;” ...”’ As His disciple, you don’t have to go around sticking your hand on a stack of Bibles swearing and calling on God to witness, ‘Man, I am really telling the truth this time!’ Just tell the truth! It’s not enough just to tell the truth when you swear that you are not lying. He says, ‘I expect you to tell the truth—period.’ You don’t have to make a big deal of it. If you open your mouth, whatever comes out must be the truth. That’s all it means—“yes,” “yes” and “no,” “no.” Verses 38-39, “‘You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, “Do not retaliate with evil: but whoever shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”’”

You’ve seen the bumper stickers, “Don’t get mad, get even.” Christ did not subscribe to that philosophy. That principle, “an eye for an eye,” as was given in the Old Testament was a principle of civil justice. In other words, it simply meant that the punishment had to fit the crime.

If you look in even fairly recent history, European history through the 1700s and early 1800s, you find some horrible punishments being meted out for some very minor crimes. Well, the principle that God gave to ancient Israel was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” You don’t exact more than the value of the crime. It didn’t mean they gouged out eyes and teeth. If you go back, you find in Exodus 21-23 that there were actually fines that were levied. It was simply an expression that the punishment fit the crime.

What Christ is telling His disciples is, ‘Look, this does not apply in personal dealings. You don’t have some kind of personal vendetta to get even. You put your cause in God’s hands. That’s not a principle that carries over into private feuds and

vengeance. Don’t have this attitude that, ‘Nobody is going to get by with anything with me.’ Be peaceable. I am telling you that you need to have a peaceable attitude and be willing even to suffer loss to keep the peace.’

Verses 43-44, “‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, “Love your enemies, and bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, and persecute you.”’”

It’s not enough simply to love the ones that love you and hate everybody else. If you do that, you’re not “one up” on sinners. That’s no big deal; a lot of people do that. You have gangsters who like their friends and hate their enemies. You’re not “one up” on anybody else when you do that, but rather, have God’s attitude, which is the attitude of love and concern.

Verse 48, Christ magnifies and sums up, “‘Therefore you shall become perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.’” In other words, become like God. That’s what the New Covenant is all about—the law being written in our hearts and in our minds. Christ is amplifying and expounding it. Chapter 5 is dealing with the way we think and the way we are, which carries over into what we do.

In Matthew 6, He begins to deal with other matters. He deals with things we do—the outward displays of religion, the giving of alms, making offerings and prayer. Christ emphasizes things that are acts of worship need to be private acts of worship between you and God. When you are going to make a gift or give an offering, you do it privately. Don’t be as the hypocrites and sound the trumpet before you give an offering to make sure everybody is looking and then drop it in coin by coin. Religion was what they did to impress other people. Christ said your religion needs to be between you and God, not something you put on as a public display to impress others.

It’s the same thing with prayer. At the time of the morning and evening sacrifice (roughly at about 9 A.M. and 3 P.M.), a coal from the altar of burnt offerings was taken into the Holy Place and placed in the altar of incense. Incense was sprinkled on it and the odors of incense wafted up and filled the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

We are told in Revelation 5:8 this symbolized the prayers of the saints. The Jews understood that symbolism, and they came to regard the time of the burnt offerings as the hour of prayer. Some of the Pharisees took upon themselves the custom of

making a point of praying at those particular times when that ceremony was being carried out in the temple. They thought, 'Well, that symbolizes our prayers going before God, so we'll make a point of praying at that time.'

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that. The Pharisees, however, made such a fetish out of it that they would make a point of being out on the street at that time. They started into these prayers because, after all, it was the hour of prayer. It was something they wanted, in effect, to impress everybody else with and make them feel kind of spiritually inferior—'I'm praying, why aren't you?'

Christ emphasized, 'Look, when you pray, go to God; go in a private place.' Now there are certainly examples of very brief public prayers. Christ on several occasions gave public prayers such as the blessing of a meal or invoking God's presence at a particular occasion. In the Old Testament, you find Solomon doing that at the dedication of the temple. We find reference to it being done in the Church, but it was very brief public prayer offered by one on behalf of the congregation. It was not the prayer life of the individual. Christ was making reference to people who were doing what they did to be seen of men.

Christ went on to expound about prayer and said, 'This is the way you pray; this is the way you do it.'

Matthew 6:7, "...do not use vain and empty chants, as the pagans do: ..." So, what do people do? They have taken what Christ gave to the disciples as an outline and they memorize it and parrot it out. They just rattled it off and made a vain repetition out of it. There is nothing wrong with memorizing this piece of scripture any more than there is anything else. But when something is just repeated over and over in a meaningless fashion, like an "Our Father" or "Hail Mary," just repeated over and over and over, it becomes meaningless. It is a vain repetition; that's not what prayer is all about.

Prayer is communication with God. You're talking to God. Christ told the disciples this is the way you do it. He gave them the outline and people memorize the outline instead of filling in the details. They just parrot the outline over and over again until it becomes meaningless. He emphasized the way that we should go about it. We are to address God as our Father, praising Him, desiring and acknowledging our need for Him, His Kingdom and the time when His will shall be completely fulfilled on this earth. We

pray about our needs and ask God for forgiveness. We ask God to help us to not be overwhelmed with sore trials, but rather, delivered from Satan's power and influence.

He continued and expounded on the subject of forgiveness in Matthew 6.

Verses 14-15, "Because if you forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive men their sins, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your sins against Him." The matter of forgiveness is a very important matter to understand. If we want to receive forgiveness, we have to be prepared to give it out. We cannot go around holding a grudge, resentment and animosity, and then expect to receive God's mercy and God's forgiveness.

He continued and discussed fasting.

Verses 16-18, "When you fast, do not be as those sanctimonious pretenders, affecting a gloomy, mournful appearance; because they contort their faces in order that they may show off to men that they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, this is their reward. But when you are fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not give the appearance to men that you are fasting, but rather, fast to your Father who is in secret: and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Again, it is something that is to be private. It reflects our private worship to God.

He then emphasized the fact that where our treasure is, that's where our heart is going to be.

Verses 19-21, "Do not store up wealth and treasure for yourselves upon the earth, where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves can burglarize and steal: But instead, store up wealth and treasure for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoil, and where thieves do not burglarize or steal: because where your wealth and treasure is, there is where your heart will be also." There's a balance in our attitude in terms of our service to God with the material and physical things.

Verse 33, there is recognition that, as it says, "But you should first seek after and strive for the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and character; and all these things shall be added to you." Put God first and everything else will fall in place. It is not a matter that we don't need physical things; it is just a matter of getting our priorities straight.

In Matthew 7:1-5, He showed the kind of attitude that we are to have—not a judging, condemning kind of an attitude.

He sums it all up here. The whole meaning of the Law and the Prophets is summed up.

Matthew 7:12, “Therefore whatever you desire that men should do to you, you should also do to them: because this is the whole meaning of the Law and the Prophets.” In other words, the whole point of God’s law is to treat people the way you want to be treated. It is a matter of love, outgoing concern.

In verse 21, Jesus also went on to make plain that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” is going to enter the Kingdom. There are those who think that all you have to do is say, “I believe.” James brings out.

James 2:19, “You believe there is one God, you do well. But the demons also believe—and tremble.” If all you do is to believe in God, you are not even “one step up” on the devil. He believes in God. He knows that.

Verse 20, it is a matter that, “...faith without works is dead.”

Matthew 7:21, Jesus brings out, “Not everyone who calls Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only he who is doing and practicing the will of My Father who is in heaven.” It’s not just a matter of saying “Lord, Lord”; it is a matter of obeying and serving God, of yielding and surrendering to God. That’s what’s involved. If we really believe God, we are going to surrender to Him.

Jesus went on to make a contrast between the way that leads to life and the way that leads to death.

Verses 13-14, “Enter in through the narrow gate: because wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leads into destruction. And those who are entering through the wide gate and the broad way are the majority of all people. Because narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way, which leads into life. And those who are finding life are few.” There is a distinction that God’s way—the pathway that leads to life—is a narrow pathway. The way that leads to destruction is very wide and broad because that’s the one that most are on. If you’re on the road that everybody else is on, you’re on the wrong road—that is kind of what it comes down to.

A lot of people think, ‘How can all these people be wrong?’ The question is not how can they all be wrong; the question is how can they all be right? Christ made plain that most people weren’t going to be on the right road. If you’re on the road and you look around and, ‘Boy, everybody is headed this way,’ you better go back and look again at the road signs because you made a

wrong turn somewhere. Christ makes a contrast. We can’t just do something because others are doing it. That’s one of the worse reasons in the world to do it. ‘Well, I saw everybody else do it. I saw them do it, and I thought I’d just do the same thing.’

Christ makes it plain we need to be doing what we are doing because we are trying to follow Him. We are trying to be like Him. When you make decisions and choices in your life, they need to be based on the fact that you are trying to become more like Christ, not more like the world or more like somebody else. Jesus Christ is the One we are trying to copy. We are trying to emulate His attitude. We need to examine what we do, the way we are in comparison to Him. He’s our standard.

False prophets known by their fruit: Matthew 7:15-20 and Luke 6:43-45.

Matthew 7:15, he warns us, “But be on guard against false prophets, who come to you dressed as innocent sheep, but within they are extorting and ravenous wolves.” The devil doesn’t show up with a little sign hanging around his neck saying, ‘I am the devil; I am here to deceive you.’ You can always recognize the devil because he has a red suit and pitchfork in his hand, right? He never shows up that way. He shows up as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

As the Sermon on the Mount concludes, we continue the account in Mark 2.

Mark 2:1, “And after some days He again came back into Capernaum, and the news circulated that He was in the house.” In other words, the news circulated that He was back home again. That’s an indication that He had a house; He had His own home there in Capernaum. We saw earlier of a move that He made from Nazareth to Capernaum. When He got back to Capernaum, the news was that He was simply in the house. He was back at home. People knew where to come. It was a specific house where they expected Him to be.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath: Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:17-26 and Matthew 9:2-8.

In Mark 2:3-4, there were some who had a friend who was paralyzed and they wanted to bring him in to have Christ heal him. But there were so many people crowding in that they couldn’t even get in. They climbed up on the roof, cut a hole in it and let him down that way.

Now I think we understand that the kind of roofs they had were not our steep pitched Acadian-style roofs. Probably all five of them would have

needed to be healed if that was the case. Somebody probably would have fallen off. Roofs are steep-pitched in this area because it is an area where there is a lot of rain. Capernaum was an area where there was very little rain, and they didn't need a steep pitch on the roof. They generally had a flat roof and they would use it as extra living quarters. Often that would be the case or, if you had a shady area, you could pitch kind of a little canopy up there. You could "catch" a breeze and it would be pleasant.

But anyway, they got up on top of this flat roof, dug back and let this guy down. Christ healed him.

Mark 2:5, notice He told the man, "... 'your sins have been forgiven you.'" The Pharisees and scribes got all upset.

Verse 7, "'Why does this man speak blasphemies this way? Who is able to forgive sins except God?'" 'Who do You think You are to forgive sins?'

Verse 9, He said, "'Which is easier to say to the paralytic: 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to tell him, 'Stand up! Pick up your bed, and walk?'" When the guy got up and left, that kind of clenched the argument. See, it is easy to say, 'I forgive you and your sins are forgiven.' How do you know though that they speak with authority? -Well, if they tell you, 'Rise, take up your bed,' and *you walk*. By "bed" He meant like a little bedroll. He was not talking about picking up your Sealy Posturepedic and putting it on your shoulder. It was like a sleeping bag or something. That kind of clenched the argument as to 'whom do You think You are to forgive sin?' Obviously God was paying attention.

We might just notice here a couple of other things.

Matthew is called: Mark 2:13-14, Luke 5:27-28 and Matthew 9:9.

Mark 2:14-16 is when Levi (also known as Matthew) the son of Alphaeus was called.

Scribes and Pharisees accuse Christ: Mark 2:16-17, Luke 5:30-32 and Matthew 9:11-13.

In Matthew 9:11-13, the Pharisees were upset when they saw Jesus going in and eating with Matthew and some of his friends. They asked, 'Why are you associating with these sinners?' Christ said He hadn't come to call the righteous (or actually those who thought they were righteous) to repentance, but those who knew they were sinners. Christ said, 'These people, by your definition, are sinners. They are the ones that need to repent. You don't need to repent; why should I take up My time with you? You

don't think you have anything to repent of. You figure they have a lot to repent of; maybe I better tell them about it.' He just put it back on them because they were standing there always ready to carp and criticize because they were jealous. They resented the authority with which He spoke, and they felt like He was going to take away their following.

Parable of the wineskins: Mark 2:21-22, Luke 5:36-39 and Matthew 9:16-17.

Luke 5:36-39, there is an interesting expression that is sometimes not clearly understood, "And also He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a new piece of cloth on an old garment; otherwise the new tears from the old garment, and the old does not agree with the new piece of cloth. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst open the wineskins and it will be poured out, and the wineskins will be destroyed. But new wine should be put into new wineskins, and then both are preserved together. Also, no one having drunk the old wine, immediately desires the new wine; because he says, "The old is better."'"

The wineskins were made out of leather and they stretched and expanded. The gases in the fermentation process stretched them out. By the time it was over with, they had been used and the leather was set. It wasn't going to expand anymore; it would burst. Christ said to put new wine in new wine skins and both are preserved. No one having drunk the old wine immediately desires the new, as the old is better.

This is a parable. Christ gives a very important principle. You see, new truth can't be added to an old approach to life. The new and the old don't go together—it won't fit. People are more comfortable with the old because it is familiar, but when you learn God's truth, you can't simply patch it onto your old way of life. It is an entirely new way of life. You can't fit in a few elements of God's truth (the new wine, so to speak); you can't fit that in with the old way because it will just burst it asunder. It won't fit. It takes a new way of life to be conformable to God's truth.

I have already commented on the Sermon on the Mount in regards to Christ's office as Mediator of the New Covenant. The whole basis of the New Covenant is the amplification of the principles of the Ten Commandments applied to a spiritual nation. We find right here in the Sermon on the Mount that Christ amplified the principles in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, just as Moses in Exodus 21, 22 and 23 amplified the principles

in terms of dealing on a physical basis with a physical, carnal nation.

The key word in Exodus 21, 22 and 23, over and over again, was the word “IF.” If a man shall do such and such, this is what you do. That’s what Moses had to be concerned with. Because the people didn’t have a heart to obey, all these “ifs” were given. He finished giving the Ten Commandments, but what do you do if somebody does this or somebody does that? What do you do when this happens? You are dealing with a civil nation. Well, if this happens, then this is what you do; if that happens, then you do this. It goes through Exodus 21, 22 and 23.

Now Christ in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 doesn’t deal with all of these “what ifs” because this is a message directed to people whom God is writing His laws in their hearts and minds—people who have a heart to obey, people who are wanting to surrender to God. He explains the principle: this is what you are supposed to become. This is really the principle of the law magnified. This is what God was really driving at, not simply a list of, “this is what is going to happen if you do this, and this is what you do if you do that.” It was a different approach given for a different people for different circumstances.

I hope this has given you a little bit of insight into this portion of Scripture—Passover 28 A.D. to Passover 29 A.D. We are one and a half years into Christ’s ministry. We are going to pick it up next time at the Passover of 29 A.D. We are going to find that as we get further along, the scripture begins to go into more and more detail, and we will go into greater and greater lengths of detail on some of this.