

Bible Study # 32
March 14, 1989
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 8, 11, 12, 13; Mark 2:23—4:20; Luke 6:1—8:15; John 5

This evening we **are covering the period from the Passover of 29 A.D. until the Feast of Tabernacles of the same year, 29 A.D.** It was during this period of time that Jesus passed the halfway point of His three and one-half year ministry. We want to note some things concerning that this evening.

The last Bible study covered the time between the Passover 28 A.D. and the Passover 29 A.D. Remember Jesus began His public ministry at the fall festival season of 27 A.D. That was when He appeared where John was baptizing by the River Jordan. Jesus came there and was baptized by John. He remained there preaching for a short period of time. We are not told how long. Within a short period of time, He returned to Galilee and went to Cana for a wedding feast that is recorded; His first public miracle is recorded. Then within a short period of time after that, He left, went away into the wilderness by Himself, fasted for forty days and was tempted of Satan. He went through this period of time and returned from there; we picked up the story with His coming to Jerusalem at the Passover of 28 A.D., which was about six months after He had been baptized by John.

He made a very dramatic appearance in Jerusalem. He came in and chased the moneychangers out of the temple. We went through the whole thing. You remember the whole story. Last Bible study we focused in on that time period. We picked it up there as He cleansed the temple. Then He began that period of privately teaching of His disciples.

Now understand that Jesus had more than 12 disciples. There were 12 of the disciples that were ordained as apostles. We will note that this evening. A disciple was anyone who followed Him. At the end of His public ministry, the time that is recorded in Acts 1, there were 120 acknowledged followers—120 disciples or students. Out of that 120, there were 12 that He singled out and ordained as apostles.

Remember the story in Acts 1, after Judas had committed suicide and Simon Peter and the rest of the 11 were gathered in the upper room. They said they needed someone to take Judas' place

and that it needed to be someone who was with them from the beginning. So they singled out two individuals, as recorded in Acts 1, who they said had been with them from the beginning. In other words, the two had been among the disciples; they were not of the twelve, but were disciples or students. They had been there, had seen the things that Jesus had done and had heard firsthand the things He had said. In that sense, they could testify as an eyewitness of the resurrection and of the things that had transpired. During that year we had the private teaching to His disciples, the Sermon on the Mount and various things that are recorded.

We pick up the story this evening around the time of the Passover 29 A.D. This was about a year and a half after Jesus had begun His public ministry. We will focus on a six-month period of 29 A.D. The bulk of this time Jesus spent in Galilee.

The religious establishment, the Pharisees and particularly the Sadducees (the priestly group), was centered in Jerusalem. If you look at a map, you find there are three areas that make up what we call the Holy Land. There was in the southern part around Jerusalem the province of Judea. North of Judea was the Roman province of Samaria; north of Samaria was the province of Galilee. These three taken together plus some territory on the other side of the Jordan River make up the ancient kingdom of Israel.

When they split after Solomon's death, it consisted of Judah in the south and the kingdom of Israel in the north. Israel was taken into captivity; then a little over 100 years later, Judah was taken into captivity. Judah (the Jews) was the only ones that ever returned. They came back and they settled, not only in the southern area around Jerusalem, but gradually, as time went on, they spread out and settled in some of the other areas that had been anciently the territory of Israel.

The areas of Samaria and Galilee were both parts of what had been the territory of the northern tribes. The northern tribes were moved out. Babylonians were brought in to take their place and were settled there by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17). These Babylonians became known as Samaritans, taking their name from Samaria, which was the capital city of ancient Northern Israel. In our Old Testament series, we studied them and the great antipathy that was present between them and the Jews. The Jews really looked down on and despised the

Samaritans. There had been various problems in the past.

Then north of Samaria there was an area of Jewish settlement known as Galilee. Now the Jews in Judea tended to look down on Galilee and Galileans. The Jews in Judea were a very exclusivist group. They really looked down on anyone else. In Judea they did not have a lot of contact with non-Jews. They didn't have to, other than some of the Roman occupation troops and things of this sort. They really had very limited contact with non-Jews.

Galilee was an area where the population was a little more diverse. There were Jewish settlements, Jewish communities predominantly, but there was a significant Gentile settlement in the area. It tended to be more involved in direct trade and commerce. There was a lot more contact with non-Jews. The Jews in Judea kind of looked down on the Galileans. They viewed or compared the territory of ancient Israel to the temple. They compared Judea as being the Holy Place and Jerusalem to the Holy of Holies. They called Galilee the court of the Gentiles. This was kind of the area on the periphery.

So they had a kind of disparaging, patronizing attitude toward the Galileans. That's not uncommon because you can go around the world and can find that virtually anywhere you go, whoever is there, they have someone else they look down upon. That seems to be human nature. People want to look for somebody they can look down upon. So the Jews, who looked down upon a number of people, looked down upon the Jews who lived in Galilee. They looked down on the Jews who lived in Diaspora even more because they were really in contact with the Gentiles.

You have to kind of get the picture of it and realize when Jesus came in and began to preach.

John 1:46, they said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth [Galilee]?" That was kind of their attitude—if it was of any value, certainly it originated in Judea and Jerusalem; anything of value, anybody who knew anything originated from right there. 'I mean, obviously, if this guy knew very much, He would be one of us. How could He be anything of value; He comes from way up there.'

We have regional and sectional conflicts in our nation and our society today—same thing. Human nature is basically the same all the way down. Jesus knew that when He began to spend a lot of time in Jerusalem and Judea, He was going to very quickly come into really strong conflict with the religious leaders because He was going

to be right there in their territory, on their turf. It wasn't going to be long before they were going to resent it—and how! They were jealous of Him because, as they viewed it, He came in and did these things, said these things that people were impressed with. They flocked to hear Him and they ignored them as religious leaders.

They worried, 'We are going to lose our status, our position. We have a good thing going. We are the ones that everybody looks to. Then He comes in here and people start paying attention to Him, acknowledge Him and want to listen to Him. They are impressed with Him. He performs these miracles and preaches these powerful sermons; we don't like the effect it is having on the people. What's more, we are afraid that He is going to stir up something, and the Roman government is going to intervene because He is talking about a Kingdom of God. He is talking about being the Messiah, or people are talking about that and saying that He is the Messiah. All we need is something that provokes the Romans, and they will send in troops. They will "smash" us and we are out of a job. We don't want that!'

Jesus knew that when He started spending a lot of time in Jerusalem and Judea, a crisis was going to come to a head very quickly. The result was that Jesus did not stay there in Jerusalem a great deal of the time of His ministry. He would come up there for the holy days, would be there for periods of time and then He would leave—just be gone out of the way. He would be up in Galilee and other areas, preaching and teaching, but He was kind of out on the periphery of Jerusalem.

The Jews there tended to think that anything of significance had to be going on where they were. It's kind of like today. The power centers in our nation are Washington, D.C. and New York City. People who are part of the Eastern power establishment tend to view anything going on in (as they would view it) the "backwater" areas of the country, well, that can't be of any significance. If it were important, it would be going on right there in Washington or New York. How can something of value be going on in Lafayette, Louisiana? Nothing of value could be going on there because, after all, they are the ones who are where the center of power and money and control and everything else is. People tend to have that kind of shortsighted outlook. That's true in our time today and it's true in other times, other societies. It's the nature of things.

During the time period that we are going to cover this evening, Jesus was going over Galilee, city

by city. Galilee, although it was looked down upon, was really the richest part of Palestine. Palestine at the time of Christ was divided into Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Alfred Edersheim in his classic work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, quotes various ancient sources to prove that Galilee had upwards of 240 cities and towns of 15,000 inhabitants or more. *Josephus* points out that it was a rich area that teemed with agriculture. The climate was described as being the best in Palestine, and there were great forests in that area at that time—dissimilar to what it is today. Anciently the whole land was a land flowing with milk and honey.

As a result of misuse and as a result of God's removal of His blessing, various problems came in. And, of course, we have seen parallels in more modern times. As an area is denuded of its forests, the patterns of rainfall change, the climate tends to change and various problems come in. Things have changed since then, but at that time, Galilee was really the richest area agriculturally in Palestine.

The Sea of Galilee, which was there, was famous for its abundance of fish. The entire area was a rather prosperous commercial area. Caravan routes came through there. It was an area that had a lot of contact with the Gentiles. This is where Christ grew up, and it is also the area where He spent a great deal of His public ministry.

During the time period we are covering this evening, shortly after the Days of Unleavened Bread in 29 A.D., the 12 apostles were selected from among Christ's disciples and ordained. Now, we should take note of the apostles and who they were. Sometimes if you have seen some of the movies, they really don't give an accurate view. It shows one of the accounts we will read this evening of Christ walking by and seeing **Peter and Andrew**. He tells them, 'Come and follow Me; I will make you fishers of men.' As that kind is introduced in the movie, you see Him come by and kind of "lays eyes" on these guys—transfixes them with a stare. It's almost as though there is a hypnotic effect; they drop what they are doing and follow off.

Well, it wasn't that way. He had known Peter and Andrew for a period of time. Andrew and Peter both knew Him. Andrew, in particular, had been a disciple of John the Baptist and was there when Jesus was baptized. John had pointed out Jesus to His disciples. Andrew followed Him because John had pointed Him out. Plus, Peter and Andrew (who were brothers) were in a fishing

partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

James and John were the sons of Zebedee and their mother's name was Salome. Salome was a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. So that meant that James and John were first cousins of Jesus Christ. They had known about Him from the time of early childhood. Since they did not grow up in the same town, we don't know exactly how much contact they had. But, undoubtedly, they had some contact, particularly at festival times, as they would tend to travel together to Jerusalem to the Feasts and things of that sort.

So they certainly knew who He was and there was contact there. On occasion they had spent time with Him, had listened to Him and had been with Him. By the time He told Peter, 'Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men,' Peter and Andrew had been with Him on a number of occasions, had heard Him preach and had probably been there at Cana of Galilee and had seen the turning of the water into wine. They had heard the Sermon on the Mount; they had been with Him from time to time at various occasions.

They were in business for themselves and would be gone for periods of time, but they were there spending time with Christ when He was in the locale. They were students as well as disciples, but they had not turned their back on their business. So at this point Jesus told them, 'I have something in store for you that will go beyond what you are doing. You need to leave that and come follow Me full time.' By that time, they knew enough and were convinced enough that they were prepared to do so.

We read also of **Philip** who was a native of Bethsaida. He was a friend of James, John, Peter and Andrew; he was also a disciple of John the Baptist.

Bartholomew was also known as Nathaniel. Bartholomew is really a surname. "Bar" in Hebrew or in Aramaic (which is virtually the equivalent of Hebrew) signifies "son of." "Bartholomew" means "the son of Tholomey or Tholomeu." The term "bar" was commonly used, like where Jesus referred to Peter as "Simon Barjona." That just meant "Simon, the son of Jonah." So Bartholomew or Nathaniel, as he was also called, was a native of Cana. Philip introduced him to Jesus Christ.

We are not told much about **Thomas** in terms of his background. According to tradition, he was born in Antioch.

Matthew is also known as Levi. He is described as the son of Alphaeus. He was a tax collector from Capernaum. We have two other individuals who are referred to as the sons of Alphaeus. There is no specific mention of **James**, the son of Alphaeus, and Judas (not Iscariot), also known as **Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus**. He is called Labbaeus Thaddaeus in one case or Judas (not Iscariot). That particular Judas that is mentioned here and James, the son of Alphaeus, were bothers.

There was a third brother in the group—**Simon** the Zealot was also a brother of James, the son of Alphaeus. This particular Simon, Judas and James were the sons of Alphaeus. Their mother was another sister of Mary, the mother of Christ. So those three were also cousins. Simon the Zealot is called Simon the Canaanite in one account. The term “Canaanite” in that context refers to “a political faction”; it was a nationalist faction. The Zealots were out to overthrow the Roman government.

Now, note here, the people that Christ called. Christ called individuals out of a wide variety of backgrounds. They came out of divergent political backgrounds. Christ’s disciples did not remain in those backgrounds. They did not remain involved in politics. Simon didn’t keep trying to go out and overthrow the Roman government. If you want the two extremes, you have Simon the Zealot and Matthew who was a Roman tax collector.

Now the Jews really resented Roman occupation. They resented that greatly because, as they viewed it, they said, ‘Look, God gave this land to us. Who are these pagan Romans coming in here “lording it” over us? They really think they are something, but really they are nothing because we are the chosen people, and God gave this land to us. These pagan Romans are coming in here “lording it” over us, oppressing us and taking taxes.’ They really resented that anyone would do such a thing. So they despised Jews who worked in cooperation with the Roman government.

For a parallel, go back in American History to the time of the reconstruction after the War Between the States. Nobody was hated worse in the South than the group called the “Scalawags”—Southerners who collaborated with the Carpetbaggers because they could see that was the way to success and money. Their own people hated them because they viewed them as a collaborator, a “turncoat.” You can look at other parallels and examples of history.

That’s one that would be more familiar to us, but you can look at other parallels.

Nobody is more unpopular than someone who is viewed as a traitor to his own. ‘You have turned your back on us, your own people, and you are in collaboration with those that we view as the enemy.’ They actually hated them worse than they did the enemy. ‘The enemy is from outside and came in—we can understand that. But you—you are a “turncoat.”’ That’s the way Matthew was viewed.

You have to understand how the Jews looked down on what they called the “Publicans.” “Publican” simply meant “someone who held public responsibility, public office, an employee of the Roman government,” which meant that they were in continual contact with the Romans. They were viewed as collaborators with the Roman government, plus the fact that many or most of the tax collectors were notorious for being crooks.

The Romans operated on a principle that the tax collector was paid on a percentage basis. The more he collected, the more he made, which gave incentive to be an industrious tax collector. Because the Romans wanted to make sure they got “theirs,” they figured the best way was to pay the guy on a percentage basis. That way he would get a lot more for them. The more he got for them, the more he got for himself, which you can imagine did not endear the tax collector to the people.

So you had on that extreme one such as Matthew. On the other hand, you had Simon the Zealot who was a really revolutionary firebrand type. That’s what the Zealots were; they were kind of an ultra nationalist movement. They used everything from guerilla tactics and techniques to drive out and overthrow the Romans. They were involved in various methods of political propaganda and attempts to stir up and incite rebellion. They were ready to go to war to drive out the Romans.

So Jesus’ disciples came from both ends and all in the middle. God calls His people out from a variety of backgrounds. Every one of us comes from a variety of backgrounds, perhaps even a variety of political backgrounds. Some may have no interest whatsoever in politics; others may have been very involved on the one side or the other. God calls us out. And that’s just it—we are called out (John 6:44).

Christ’s disciples did not continue to stay enmeshed in that world’s system. Simon the Zealot had to learn; Matthew had to learn. All of

them had to learn that there was a Kingdom coming. It was the Kingdom of God. It was not going to be set up by some revolutionary overthrow; it was not going to be voted in; it was not going to be this or that. It was going to be established by the power of God.

So Christ called His disciples from a variety of backgrounds.

The final one, **Judas Iscariot**, was the treasurer of the group. He was called the “keeper of the money bag” (NIV, John 12:6; 13:29) (NKJ, “money box”). That meant he was the treasurer. I would call that to your attention; I think we should see that God sometimes allows things.

Sometimes we wonder why God is allowing this. Sometimes people get upset because they think, ‘Well, surely God wouldn’t allow this.’ Well, Judas was there, right at the top. He was one of the 12 apostles for three and one-half years. He held a position of responsibility and trust. He was the keeper of the bag; he was the treasurer. Not only was he the treasurer, he was also a thief.

Now that’s not speculation. It says so right there in John 12:6. Remember the story when the woman bought the ointment to pour on Christ’s feet and Judas got upset. He asked, ‘Why was this stuff wasted? This is extravagance; this is waste—and it’s ridiculous. This stuff should have been taken out and sold; we could have gotten money for it and given it to the poor. And here you let this woman just waste it, pour it out here on Your feet.’

Boy, he was all upset. He thought that was terrible and, undoubtedly, some of the others standing around thought, ‘Yeah, that’s a good point, why wasn’t it sold? I’ll bet we could have gotten a lot of money for that and given it to the poor and helped people.’

John 12:6, John adds in the parenthetical thought, “This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box [keeper of the bag]; and he used to take what was put in it” That’s why he said it. Sometimes what people say and what their motive for saying it is entirely different. John adds that in when he tells the story in retrospect—that way you don’t think that Judas was this altruistic guy. Yeah, he sounded that way. He didn’t say, ‘Give it to me so I can steal it.’ No, he said, ‘This stuff should have been taken and sold, given to the poor and helped all these people.’ He didn’t say it because he cared for the poor; he said it because he was the treasurer and was planning on “skimming some off the top.” He was a thief.

The point I would like to make is: Do you think Jesus knew that Judas was up to “no good” on some of that? Of course He did.

He confronted the woman at the well in Samaria and asked her where her husband was. She said, ‘Oh, I am not married.’ And He said, ‘Right, you are! You’ve had five of them, and the one you are living with now, you haven’t gotten around to marrying. It’s good that you tell the truth. You definitely are not married.’ Jesus could look into the hearts of people. He knew and could discern the motives.

Of course He knew that Judas was stealing. And you know, the situation dragged on and on for a period of time until, finally, in God’s time, it was dealt with. There’s an important lesson to learn from that: *God does not solve problems based on our time schedule.* There’s nothing you know about that is going to be news to God, nothing you’ve found out that is going to be a shock to God—‘Man, I wouldn’t have known that if you hadn’t told Me.’

Anything that is going on, even a sparrow that falls to the ground, God knows. There is nothing that happens that is news to God. God knows and God doesn’t operate on our time schedule. You see, that is a matter of walking and living by faith, of trusting God to do what He says He will do, when He chooses to do it. That is a very important lesson that all of us must learn.

Jesus shows He is Lord and Master: Luke 6:1-5, Matthew 12:1-8 and Mark 2:23-28.

Luke’s account makes it plain when this happened. The others don’t. The others simply refer to a Sabbath in which Jesus was walking through the grain fields, but Luke makes plain the time setting.

Luke 6:1, “And it occurred on the second first Sabbath [the second Sabbath of the first rank], that He passed along through the grain fields; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands and were eating.” Now the term “the second first Sabbath” (KJV, “And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first...”) is a very ambiguous thing. What in the world is that? The more literal translation would be “on the second first Sabbath.” Now what is that? What are the Sabbaths of first rank?—Those are the annual Holy Days. A reference to a Sabbath of first rank would be one of the annual Sabbaths, one of the “high-day Sabbaths,” as the Jews termed them. The “second first Sabbath” would be the second annual Holy Day, which would be the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. This is the time setting—on the second

Sabbath of first rank, which was the second annual Holy Day of Unleavened Bread.

They were passing through the grain fields and His disciples were picking ears of grain. They weren't out harvesting. They had spent the night in a house outside of the walled city and that morning they walked a short distance into town. That's normally the way people got around in those days. They didn't hop into their car to go three blocks. They walked. And when they walked, it was normally on a footpath other than some of the main Roman roads that connected the major cities. It was a footpath because all that traveled it were people going back and forth by foot. So here was a little pathway that went from the house where they had stayed going into the town, a pathway that cut through a grain field.

Some of you can remember back before all of the highways were fixed up the way they are now with all the road-grading equipment and everything. There were a lot of times the connection between houses out in the country was a small path, a bridle or footpath, maybe a wagon path. It was usually fairly narrow and kept clean by people walking back and forth or people riding an animal or pulling a wagon back and forth. If there was a field of grain next to it, it was right up there at the edge of the path.

They were walking down the path and were reaching out plucking off some heads of grain, rolling them around in their hands, getting the grains off and eating it. There was nothing illegal about that.

Deuteronomy 23:24-25, “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.”

The law made specific arrangement for the fact that a stranger, a sojourner, was welcome as they were walking down the road to anything that was out there at roadside that they could pluck off. They could not harvest in the sense of going out and gathering things to take someplace else, but what they ate as they walked along was permissible. So there wasn't a problem with that. It was not a matter of stealing; there wasn't a law of God involved.

What was involved was one of the traditions of the Pharisees, the Rabbis. The fourth commandment says you are not to work on the Sabbath. Well, the Rabbis had asked the question, ‘What is work?’ You and I ought to

know what work is, but they wanted to get technical about what work is. So they finally defined 39 different categories of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath. And each of those 39 types was sub-divided into other groups. So this came under the prohibition of harvesting on the Sabbath. Anything over three heads of grain consisted of harvesting. They had to define harvesting. You shouldn't harvest. Well, all right, how much is harvesting? They had it figured out. In Nehemiah 13, Nehemiah reprimanded them because they were coming in bearing burdens on the Sabbath. They were hauling their agricultural produce into Jerusalem. Nehemiah reprimanded them because they were not to be bringing in these burdens on the Sabbath. So when the Rabbis got through with it, they asked, what constitutes a burden? They finally concluded that anything over the weight of three dried figs consisted of a burden that you should not bring in because you were transporting agricultural produce. They had to “nail it all down.”

You understand now why so many of the top lawyers are Jewish. They have a proclivity for very detailed, technical-minded approaches to things. They have a real proclivity to be technically minded; they had become so technically minded here that, as lawyers often do, they were “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.” They missed the whole point of it; they were worried about defining every little thing.

But it gets back to whether or not we have a heart to obey. Is the question we ask, ‘How close can I get to what God really wants?’ Or is it, ‘How close can I get to the edge and not get “zapped?”’ How close can I get to the edge and God not strike me with lightning?’

‘I really don't want to get sent to the lake of fire or anything, but I want to make sure that I don't do anything more than I have to. I want to be right on the edge, dabble my toe over in the cesspool [that is this world] and get just as close as I can but stay out of trouble. I want somebody to draw a line, and I will get right up to it with my toe on it.’

That's not the way God wants us to be. It's a matter of our attitude, of our approach. Are we trying to be as much like God as we can be or are we trying to see how much we can get by with without getting into trouble? These are two totally different approaches.

Well, the approach they had taken that led to all of these lines being drawn was people really didn't have a heart to obey. They didn't want to do anything more than they had to. The Pharisees

said, 'Well, I'll tell you what we will do. We will draw these arbitrary lines and we will really "rope them in." We will attach so many "do's" and "don'ts" that they won't even be able to get close to breaking the law because we will hedge them about.' It reflects an attitude.

Matthew 12:7, Jesus said, "'But if you had only known and understood what this means, "I desire mercy, and compassion and not sacrifice," then you would not have condemned the guiltless.'" Not the guilty, but the guiltless.

If you had understood the principle, the spirit of the law, if you had understood what God meant when He said, 'I want mercy and sacrifice.' God is more concerned with an inward attitude that is displayed by outward action than He is by somebody who simply goes through the motion of outward ritual and conformity. 'What you see is what you get!' There is a contrast, a play on the symbolism.

Jesus utilized that time period and emphasized a part of the spiritual lesson. A little later we find He was in the synagogue and was teaching. Notice why they watched Him; they watched Him to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.

Man with withered hand healed: Luke 6:6-10, Mark 3:1-5 and Matthew 12:9-13.

Luke 6:7, "And the scribes and the Pharisees were carefully watching Him to see whether or not He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation and complaint against Him." They were doing it so they could have an accusation. They were looking for a chance to accuse. They were not concerned about helping someone.

Matthew 12:11-12, Jesus pointed out an example to them, "But He answered them, 'Which man shall there be of you, who shall have one sheep, and if this sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, shall not take hold of it and pull it out? How much better then is a man that a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'" If you have a sheep that's stuck in the pit, you pull him out. Here this man has his right hand all withered and crippled; Christ reached out and told him, "Be healed" (v. 13). He knew that they were watching. They were looking for an excuse to accuse. We see their attitude. They hated Him because they felt He was a threat to their domination over the people.

Jesus prays and selects twelve disciples: Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-16.

Mark 3:13-16, "And He went out to a mountain and He called to Him those He had chosen: and they came to Him. And He ordained and

appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power and authority to heal diseases and to cast out demons. And He gave Simon an additional name, Peter." Peter is always mentioned first; he was the leader of the twelve. In every listing that you find of the 12 apostles, Simon Peter's name is always mentioned first. We find here the listing of them. We have already gone through that.

We find here how Christ went about selecting them. He went out to a private place. He prayed all night. He was facing a momentous decision. Luke 6:12-13 mentions that He prayed all night in prayer to God concerning the selection of these 12, going over each one of them, talking about it and discussing it with the Father before making that very important decision. He ordained them as apostles, sent them out to preach and gave them authority to heal and to cast out demons.

Jesus heals the centurion's servant: Luke 7:2-10 and Matthew 8:5-13.

Luke follows more of a direct chronological account. Matthew tends to be topical; he deals with topics or subjects and lumps things together with only the very most general regard for chronology. It's just that he is writing from a different standpoint.

Luke 7:2-5 brings out that there was a centurion, a Roman soldier, who had a servant who was sick and about to die. This Roman soldier was very concerned about his servant. He was a man that had come to have a certain regard for the Jews. He had knowledge of the Jewish religion, what the Jews sometimes termed a "proselyte of the gate." In other words, he was not fully converted into Judaism, but he was one who would frequent the synagogues and would seek to learn these things. The Roman soldier heard about Jesus and sent elders of the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant.

These elders came to Jesus and said, 'Look, this man is a very deserving man. He loves our nation. He's been very favorable to us; he built a synagogue for us. We wish you would come and do as he asks.' Jesus went with them and when he was fairly close to the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him.

Luke 7:6-8, "...saying to Him, 'Lord do not trouble Yourself because I am not worthy...that You should even come under my roof. Furthermore, neither did I consider that I was worthy myself to come to You. But just give the command and my servant shall be healed.

Because I also am a man appointed under authority, and having soldiers under me; and I command this one, “Go,” and he goes, and to another, “Come,” and he comes; and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.”

He said, ‘I understand how authority works. I don’t deserve for You to come into my house. I don’t feel worthy to even come up and talk to You face to face and I certainly don’t deserve the honor that You would bestow in doing that. I don’t need that because I understand authority. You don’t have to come over here because I know You have authority and all You have to do is give the word. I may not understand a lot of things, but one thing I understand—I understand authority. I am a Roman soldier and I know how authority works. If you have authority, you say it and it is done.’

They didn’t put things to a vote in the Roman army. Authority was absolute. When they said go, you went. There was no question about it. You didn’t ask to know why you were supposed to go. You took off. This Roman Centurion said, ‘I understand authority and I know You have authority. So, really, all that is needed is You just give the word and my servant is going to be healed.’

Verse 9, “But when Jesus heard these things, He was amazed: and turning to the crowd that was following Him, He said, ‘I tell you, I have not found even in Israel such great faith.’” He marveled. He said, ‘You know, I have never met an Israelite that had this kind of faith. Here this Roman soldier has an understanding of faith that puts to shame all the rest of you.’ He told His disciples and all of those that were there, ‘You know this Roman soldier understands what faith is all about—he grasps that.’

There is an important lesson to learn here, a lesson of what faith is all about. Faith really gets back to the confidence that God can and will do what He says He will do. The Centurion had confidence. So often we get our eyes on “the around” and lose sight of the power of God. We live in an age in which we are surrounded with all of the things that man can do, all of the glitter and glamour of man’s technology. We are so surrounded with what man can do that we lose sight of what God can do.

Jesus made the observation in Luke.

Luke 18:8, “...when the Son of man comes will He really find faith on the earth?” He gives the indication that He wouldn’t find very much.

I think we have to understand—we have to realize—that we live in a faithless age. Maybe

part of it is that of all the ages that didn’t understand authority, ours is probably the chief. There is a correlation of the understanding of authority and faith. Nobody understood it better than this Roman soldier. We, perhaps, live in an age that has less faith, as well as an age that understands authority less, than any other age. It shouldn’t surprise us that there is a little bit of a correlation here. Christ pointed this out, and this example is set down in the Bible to give us some insight as to what faith is all about.

Matthew 8:10, as He was talking to the Centurion, Christ told some of the Pharisees around them, “...not even in Israel have I found so great faith.”

Verses 11-12, “But I say to you, that many shall come from East and West and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of this Kingdom shall be thrown into the outer darkness...”

He looked around and said, ‘You think you have it made. Let Me tell you something; you see that example over there, that Roman centurion. Understand something—when the Kingdom comes, you are going to find that there are people from the east and west and north and south—from all over the world. You are going to find people of every background who come and sit down with Abraham in the Kingdom because they’re the children of faith—like this Roman Centurion. You’re going to find people of every background, people from all over, who are going to be there with Abraham. Some of you think you have it made because of your physical origin, but you are going to find yourself on the “outside looking in” because God looks on the heart.’

God looks on what we are, not simply on what we have or whatever the external trappings are. God looks on the heart, and that is very important.

Scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus: Mark 3:22-27 and Matthew 12:24-30.

They accused Christ of casting out demons by Beelzebub, and He showed what a ridiculous statement that was.

Matthew 12:30, we note, “Anyone who is not with Me is against Me; and anyone who doesn’t gather with Me, scatters.”

Verse 25, Christ had been talking here, “...‘that a kingdom divided against itself is brought to ruin and desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.’” This should certainly show that Christ is not seeking to work through two or more competing organizations. God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians

14:33). Jesus said every kingdom divided against itself is going to fall. Now the Kingdom of God is not going to fall; God is not working through various competing, differing, bickering organizations. He simply doesn't do that. A kingdom divided against itself is going to fall. Jesus said, "If you are not with Me, you are against Me, and if you don't gather with Me, then you scatter." So again, we have an important lesson. We have an insight to help us realize that God is not divided in such a way as that.

Jesus warns of unpardonable sin: Mark 3:28-30 and Matthew 12:31-37.

Christ then went on to discuss the subject of the unpardonable sin and warned the Pharisees. Let me summarize it. Sin is unpardonable because it is not repented of. It involves a willful hardening of the heart and mind against the workings of God's Holy Spirit. That's why it is called blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is the agency by which God works with our mind. When a person becomes so hardened against God's Spirit, there is simply no longer a means to bring them to repentance.

Christ warned the Pharisees because they knew better than what they were saying. They were very upset and were accusing Him of things out of jealousy and resentment. He knew that they knew better. He told them, 'Look, you are hardening your heart and mind and you had better be careful.'

Matthew 12:32, He mentions concerning this unpardonable sin that, "...it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming age." Now that singles out this sin. It says it won't be forgiven now or in the future. That shows, of course, that some sins will be forgiven in the age to come.

The Catholic Church takes that verse and uses it to support purgatory—the idea that you can pay your way out in the world to come—which is taken out of context. They put it together with another couple of verses, which are also out of context, and use this to support the concept of prayers for the dead and the concept of purgatory. Many of you have come out of that background. You should be aware of the two or three verses they use to support that doctrine. This is not saying that you can say so many masses for someone and somehow help them to work their way out of purgatory because the key to being forgiven is repentance. The individual must repent. It talks about "in the world to come" or "the coming age," not simply that you go on living after you're dead. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says the

dead know not anything. You don't know anything until you're resurrected, until you're brought back to life.

The Protestant world says, 'Boy, when you die that's it—your fate is sealed.' Well, they're not right either. This verse certainly shows that there will be sins forgiven. In fact, everything except the unpardonable sin can be forgiven in the age to come, in the time of the resurrection. That is, as we understand it, the White Throne Judgment period.

Christ then went on to give a sign to the Pharisees.

Matthew 12:39-42, "And answering He said, 'A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the Prophet. Because in the same way that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineveh shall stand in the judgment with this generation and condemn it... The Queen of the South shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it...'"

That is the age to come. It is the time of judgment when the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South are going to be resurrected at the same time when that generation, with whom Christ dealt with, was going to be resurrected.

So that's the context, but notice this sign. "No sign except the sign of the prophet Jonah, three days and three nights." Do you know why that sign was uniquely a sign to the Pharisees and the religious leaders? In a special way that was the sign of Christ's Messiahship to them. Now think about it.

Remember Matthew 27:57-66. When Jesus was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea got the body, took it and quickly buried it before sunset. The Pharisees and some of the chief priests went to Pilate and said, 'We have a request to make. This deceiver while He was alive said that He would rise from the dead. Now what we are afraid of is that His disciples are going to come and steal the body and then claim He is raised from the dead. Then the latter condition of things will be worse than the beginning. We are really going to have a mess on our hands. What we need to do, at all costs, is to prevent that from happening. What we request from you, Pilate, is that you will give us a detachment of troops. We will set a guard on the tomb and we will seal the rock—nobody is going to be able to get in and steal that body. We will guarantee that. We'll have these soldiers there.'

Pilate said, 'Fine, take them.' So they ensured that nobody broke in and stole the body—and nobody did. But the body was still gone. You see, they had the witness of their own soldiers they had placed there to guard the tomb. The soldiers told them, 'Hey, this earthquake occurred and the rock rolled back. He's been resurrected. He's gone. Nobody came and stole the body.'

Remember what the Pharisees told them?

Matthew 28:13-14, "saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept." And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.'" They said, 'Look, now don't you tell anybody. You tell the people that you went to sleep and while you were asleep, the disciples came and stole the body. If Pilate hears of it and you get into trouble, we will take care of it and make sure that nothing happens to you.'

Verse 15, "So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." That story went abroad.

Now, if you worked up a lie with someone, other people may hear it and may not know if it's true or not. But there's two people that know it's a lie—you and the guy you bribed to tell it. So Christ being in the grave three days and three nights was a witness, a sign, to them in a unique way because they had the witness of their own soldiers who were there to testify He came out the same time He said He would. So it was, in a very direct sense, a sign to them.

John the Baptist hears of the works of Jesus:
Luke 7:19-23 and Matthew 11:2-6.

Matthew 11:2-3, "Now when John was in prison, he heard about the works of Christ; and when he sent two of his disciples, they asked Him, 'Are You the One who should come, or should we look for another?'" Now understand, John had known and acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, but he had not fully understood all of the Old Testament prophecies. All of a sudden something happened that he hadn't anticipated. He was put in jail, and it looked like he was going to be executed. And Jesus hadn't done anything. The Kingdom was not restored and nothing was being done to stop his execution. John began to wonder and, even more likely, his disciples were wondering if maybe they had misunderstood something. So he told them, 'Well, you go ask Him: Is He the Messiah; is He the One that everything points to or is He simply

another forerunner? Is someone coming after Him?'

Verses 4-5, "Jesus answered them, saying, 'Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.'" Jesus then simply pointed to the works that He was doing. He told them to go and tell John what they saw and what they heard and, in that sense, strengthen and encourage John in that final trial that he went through.

Verses 7-11, Jesus began to talk about John and the role that he served.

Matthew 11:12-15, He said, "But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, and the violent seize it. Because the law and all the prophets prophesied until John. And if you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah, who was prophesied to come. Anyone who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

There's an interesting comment on these verses in the *Adam Clark Commentary*. It says, "The tax gatherers and heathen, whom the Scribes and the Pharisees think has no right to the Kingdom of God, filled with zeal and earnestness, seize at once on the proper mercy of the Gospel and so take the Kingdom as by force from those learned doctors who claim for themselves the chiefest places in that kingdom." An earnestness of violent intensity is necessary to make it into the Kingdom. That's the point! It takes earnestness. You have to thrust in, to really mean it, to go after it with everything in you.

Verse 13, then he says, "...the law and all the prophets prophesied until John..." Prior to John the Baptist, only the Old Testament message was proclaimed. Since that time, the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached and the opportunity to be a part of the Kingdom was now extended. It began to be extended when John began to preach and to proclaim repentance. He was the one who came in fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi, in the "spirit and power of Elijah."

Luke 1:17, "He [John the Baptist] will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah..." This was prior to the first coming of Christ.

Are the intellectuals the ones that find it easiest to understand God's plan and purpose? Not at all!

Matthew 11:25, "...Jesus said, 'I praise You and fully agree with You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things

from the self-esteemed intellectuals and prudent ones and have revealed them unto babes.”

In other words, those who viewed themselves as the educated and the elite who looked down on everyone else really did not understand the truth. Some people think the scholars are the ones you have to look to. If all it took was scholarship to understand the truth, why didn't the scribes and Pharisees understand it? All you would need to understand the truth would be the ability to read Greek and Hebrew. Greece is full of people who speak Greek and they read it, too. If they read the New Testament, they read it in Greek. It is all “Greek” to them because that is what they speak and read. How many of them understand the truth? How many of them keep the Sabbath? How many of them are converted?

The scribes and Pharisees spoke and read Hebrew. When they studied the Old Testament, they studied it in the original Hebrew. How many of them understood what it was talking about? The point that I make is that it takes a lot more than simply knowing the Greek and the Hebrew to understand the Scriptures. If it didn't, then why aren't all the scholars the ones who are converted?

In fact, if you want to read some of the craziest, most “crackpot,” asinine, idiot theories in the world, look up some of the great scholarly writings on the subject of the Bible. You will find every “crackpot” idea that has ever occurred to the mind of man. They look back in the book of Genesis or the first five books of the Bible and find that some verses use the name YHWH and some use the name ELOIHIM. Some verses contain certain priestly instructions to the priests. The book of Deuteronomy goes back and restates a lot of things to the final generation that had been stated earlier. Instead of being able to understand what that's all about, they come to the conclusion that Moses must not have written that. They conclude that must have been written by five different people. They come up with all of these crazy ideas.

They don't understand and Christ simply said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent ones.’ –In other words, the ones who think they are wise and prudent, the self-esteemed intellectuals, those who really think they know it all. You've hidden it from them and revealed it to babes. You've revealed the truth to people they look down upon. They look down on people like you and me. ‘What do these guys know—we're the great

scholars; we know it all.’ Well, in a few years they are going to find out how much they know.

All the arguments about the Greek and Hebrew are going to be moot because Christ is going to come back in power and glory and the argument is going to be settled. About that time, none of them standing there are going to want to be arguing about the Greek. So it's a matter of realizing that understanding the truth is something that comes because God's Spirit is working with you.

Psalm 111:10 says, “...a good understanding have all those who do His Commandments...”

The key to understanding is your willingness to obey God, having a humble, teachable attitude, a child-like spirit. Part of the problem with the intellectuals is that they get so “bent out of shape” trying to reason themselves astray.

A child takes things literally. Most of us have had children. You tell something to a little child, and they take it literally. And sometimes they can come out with some statements that just embarrass the “fire” out of you—at just inappropriate times. It's just a very simple, child-like approach. You say it and they believe it. Babes, just simple-minded enough that if God says that's what it is, then we say, ‘Well, that's what it is.’

God makes a promise. We believe it and we reach out and claim it. Then there are those that reason around, reason astray, and get all bogged down in all these things. We never want to lose that child-like simplicity. When God makes a promise, when God tells us that He is our—whatever He is—our Sustainer, our Healer, our Creator, our Ruler, our Master, our Lord, you want to believe those things. Simply take Him at His word and have that simple child-like approach, that child-like teachability, that very simple approach.

Let's summarize here. We note the feast of the Jews.

John 5:1, “After that, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” This was the fall festival season. Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Verse 19, “...Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is able to do nothing by Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does these same things the Son does in exactly the same way.’” Jesus did not come to do away with His Father's law. He did not come doing His own thing. This makes plain that Jesus

Christ followed the Father completely and totally.

In terms of judgment, is the Father the One that is going to judge us?

John 5:22, Jesus said, “The Father judges no one, has given the responsibility of all judgment to the Son.”

Verse 27, “and He has given Him authority and power also to execute judgment because He is the Son of man.” The authority to judge was given and delegated to Jesus Christ. He is the One that came and lived life as a human being; God committed judgment to Him as the One responsible for that judgment.

Matthew 19:28 makes plain that we can share in that role of judgment. It talks about the 12 apostles sitting on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. So judgment is assigned out by God to Christ and those who will rule and reign under Christ.

John 5:45, let’s note, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one who is accusing you already, Moses, in whom you claim to trust and have hope.” In other words, that generation paid lip service to recognition of Moses as God’s prophet. They stood guilty because they weren’t doing and believing the very things taught by Moses whom they claimed to follow and believe.

Christ said, ‘I don’t have to accuse you; Moses accuses you’—the first five books written by Moses. He said, ‘Moses accuses you. Moses has left a written record. You pay lip service. You acknowledge it to be the Word of God, but you don’t do it. So you stand accused by the very one that you acknowledge as being God’s prophet. You don’t acknowledge Me, but acknowledge Moses—fine. I don’t accuse you; Moses accuses you because you’re not doing what Moses said. You do not believe the prophecies he gave. You’re not keeping the laws he gave.’

Notice that the whole setting here in John 5 is the setting of the fall festival season, the time of God’s judgment, the time when those in the graves will come forth.

John 5:28-29, “Don’t be amazed at this because the time is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and they shall come out of the graves...” The whole setting here of John 5 is the fall festival season, the time of the Feast of Trumpets.

Luke 8:1 makes plain, “And afterwards it happened that He made a tour through every city, city by city and village by village, preaching and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God;

and the twelve were with Him.” He was going through making a tour city by city, village by village. He was going through every place, step by step.

Parable of the sower: Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8.

We are beginning to get into many of the parables that are recorded. He began to teach the parables. The parable of the sower and the seed is the one that He is teaching here.

Matthew 13:10-11, note why He taught in parables, “But the disciples came to Him and said, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ And He answered them, saying, ‘Because it has been given to you to know and understand the mysteries of the Kingdom, but to them it is not given.’” They hear it, but they don’t understand it.

Verse 15, “Because the heart of this people have grown corrupt, and their ears have become insensitive and dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...” They don’t understand. They don’t get it. Because they don’t really have a heart to obey, it’s just simply not being made clear to them.

The parables served two purposes. They obscured the truth from those with whom God was not working, but once you have the key to the parable, it makes the truth plainer. The parables make the truth more understandable to us because we have the key.

Matthew 13:18, notice, “Therefore hear the parable of the sower.” Then Jesus begins to go through and explain the parable He told them earlier (vv. 3-8). It is an illustration that those with whom God is not working, those who don’t have the key, don’t understand it—it just goes in one ear and out the other. If God is working with you, opening your mind and calling you, you have the key to understanding. It made the truth more understandable to those with whom God was really working.

The parable of the sower is explained. Matthew 13:18-23 shows basically the different categories of people that hear the Gospel. The word goes out. A lot of it falls by the wayside. Millions of people come into contact with the telecast, with the magazine or however it reaches them; it goes in one ear and out the other. It never takes root. That’s the seed that fell by the wayside and the birds gathered up (v. 4). Then there is that which takes root in rocky stony ground (vv. 5-6), that which falls in the thorns and the thistles (v. 7) and finally, that which falls in good ground and bears fruit (v. 8).

Now notice the categories:

- 1) Those who fall by the wayside and never take root.
- 2) Those who take root in stony ground.
- 3) Those that fall in thorns and thistles.
- 4) Those that fall on good ground.

The last three categories would be the ones that we would be concerned about because if you are here, then obviously the word took some root.

Now notice the three categories. Christ explains it.

Verses 20-21, ““And he who was sown on the rocky place, this is the one who hears the word, and right away receives it with joy; but he has no root in himself, so this is only temporary: when tribulation or persecution comes along because of the word, in a short time he falls away.””

The one that fell on the stony ground, that’s the ones that hear the truth, that hear the word and with joy they receive it. They get all excited; it’s all emotion, but they have no depth of root in themselves. When persecution comes because of the word, they wither. You have the stony ground, the hard ground. The problem is that there is a lack of root structure. The root system is what gives staying power to the plant. Here are people that are shallow. It’s all on the surface; it’s all emotion. They emotionally respond very quickly, but they haven’t really proven anything. They don’t really know it and know that they know it! They haven’t deeply proven it to themselves. The result is when things happen, problems arise and difficulties come, they wither away. They don’t have staying power because they’re not deeply anchored and rooted in the truth. Their roots are shallow. It’s “spur-of-the-moment” and emotion; it doesn’t have staying power. That’s the first pitfall of the two pitfalls Christ warned about. One is not being deeply enough rooted in the truth, being too shallow.

The other is where it falls in the ground. The thorns and the thistles come up and gradually choke it out.

Verse 22, Christ said, ““And he who was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word; and the cares and distractions of this world, and the delusions of wealth, completely strangle the word, and he becomes unfruitful.””

The cares of this life gradually come in, choke it out and prevent it from being fruitful. What happens, other things get in the way; other things compete for time, attention and resources.

We plant a garden and we all have to fight the battle of the weeds and all the things that come up. Ever had tomatoes come up and choke out all

your weeds? Somehow or other it never works that way. If something is of value, you have to tend it. It takes work. You don’t have to plant your weeds and water them. I never had trouble getting weeds to grow. They just grow. Just leave them alone, don’t do anything and they’ll grow. And if you leave it alone, they’ll choke out everything else. The point is that the cares of this life will crowd in; we only have so much time, so much attention and so many resources. These things crowd in, they compete, choke it out and finally the plant never bears any fruit.

Verse 23, the final category is that it’s in good ground and brings forth fruit—some more, some less. But it’s fruitful.

So Christ warned us. He says that the word takes root. Two things you have to be concerned about: (1) It better take deep root, not be shallow and on the surface, but deeply rooted where you can stick through the hard times, the tough times. (2) You better keep your garden weeded because if you don’t, the cares of this life will come in and will choke it. This is a very important parable that Christ gave.

Christ showed right here in Matthew 13:17 that we have a more clear understanding of things that the prophets only vaguely comprehended.

Matthew 13:17, ““Because of a truth I am telling you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what you are seeing, but have not seen; and to hear what you’re hearing, but have not heard.”” God has revealed and we have the opportunity to understand things that the patriarchs of old didn’t. It’s more clearly explained and understood. That is plain.

You can go to the book of Daniel. Daniel didn’t understand many of his own prophecies. These things were “sealed up, shut up, until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:9). Christ made it plain. He explained things in detail that many of the prophets and righteous men of the past had only dimly seen.

There’s an awful lot that is packed into what Jesus taught and preached. As we go through this series, we come to these parables. We are going to be spending a pretty good bit of time over the next couple of Bible studies in going into the details of many of these things that Jesus taught and said. Many of the details of these messages are recorded. The period this evening basically brought us up until the fall festival period, from the Feast of Unleavened Bread of 29 A.D. to the fall festival period of 29 A.D.

Next time we will pick up the story where we left off, which would be in the late fall of 29 A.D.

following the festivals up until the time just before the Passover of 30 A.D. That will bring us up to the final year of Christ's ministry. One of the things we will note as we go through is that the further that Christ's ministry progresses, the more details are given—we have more details of what He said and taught.

Go through the chapters we are going to be covering next time. Review it in detail. I think that will conclude it this evening.