

Bible Study # 33
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; Mark 4:21—6:29; Luke 8:16—9:9

Christ had a perfect sense of timing. He recognized that the message He was preaching, the miracles He was working and the things He was doing were going to bring things to a real “head” with the religious leadership in Jerusalem. They resented what He was doing. The more they were exposed to the full force and impact of His message, the more they were going to resent and dislike it, the more they would be driven to do the things they ultimately did that resulted in His death. Jesus came to Jerusalem to preach. But what we will note is that until the final few months of His ministry He was only in Jerusalem occasionally. He was primarily there at the festival season. Apart from that, He covered other areas—areas that were on the periphery. In other words, He timed it to where He would conclude His ministry in Jerusalem because He knew that the full force of persecution was going to come on Him once He was in Jerusalem on a regular basis.

Word of what He was doing traveled out. Certain of the religious leaders even came out from Jerusalem to check up on Him, but they did not feel as threatened when what He was doing was primarily in the areas that they would look on as the “boondocks.” They were not as concerned with it. It did not bother them in the same way as once He began the thrust of His ministry right there in Jerusalem.

During most of this period that we **are covering this evening, He was in Galilee covering the cities there, city by city.** One of the things that we **are going to note is the extent to which we get into parables.** This evening and the next Bible study as well, we will have a lot of focus on parables that Jesus gave. Parables actually serve both to clarify and to obscure. That may sound contradictory. We find through this time that Jesus was preaching in parables.

Parable of the sower: Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:1-9 and Luke 8:4-8.

Matthew 13:3, “And He preached many things to them in parables, saying, ‘Now the sower went out to sow.’” He preached the parable of the sower.

Parables clarify and obscure: Matthew 13:10-17, Mark 4:10-12 and Luke 8:9-10.

The disciples asked Him, Matthew 13:10, “...Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus was telling these stories, examples, and illustrations; the disciples asked Him the question, ‘Why are You continually giving these illustrations?’

Verses 11-15, “...Because it has been given to you to know and understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given...This is the reason I speak to them in parables: because in observing, they do not see; and in listening, they do not hear, nor do they understand. So that in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, “In listening you shall hear, and in no way understand; and observing you shall see, and in no way comprehend: Because the heart of this people has grown corrupt, and their ears have become insensitive and dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and they should hear with their ears, and they should understand with their heart, and they should be converted, and I should heal them.””

Mark 4:10-11, “But when He was alone, those in his company with the twelve asked him about the parable. And He said to them, ‘to you it has been given to know and understand the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but to those who are without, all things are done in parables.’”

Explains parable of the sower: Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:13-20 and Luke 8:11-15.

Then Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower. He began to define for them what this illustration meant. Get the point! There are several things we learn from this. If you were to ask most religious people why Jesus taught in parables, they would say He was trying to make the meaning clear and used all these rural illustrations. No, it didn’t! The parable makes it clear in only one way. The only way is if you have the *key* to understanding what the parable is talking about. Jesus gave that key to His disciples.

He told the story about the sower and the seed, which was a nice story. The people must have thought there must be a point to this. But they didn’t really get the point. You wouldn’t understand exactly what the meaning was until Jesus went through and defined “the seed is the word of God, and the sower goes forth to sow.” He went through and defined what each category of the parable was. What it amounts to is God deals with everyone in His own time, in the time that is best for that individual. And unless God

opens our minds to understand, then we simply don't understand.

God is not trying to call everyone at this time. If God is desperately trying to call everybody and get everybody saved right now, then you have to conclude that He has failed because the vast majority of human beings who have lived and died on this earth have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12, "...there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." You look at all the millions of people in Africa and Asia who have lived and died over the centuries, and you have to conclude that the vast majority of human beings that have drawn breath on this planet have never even heard about Jesus Christ, much less comprehended the message He came to bring.

If there's been a great contest between God and the devil, the devil has been winning. If God has been doing His best for the last two thousand years, how many people believe and practice the message Jesus taught? —A very tiny minority of human beings by any stretch of the imagination.

God has a time schedule, and it's not God's purpose to open the eyes of the whole world to see things right now. God knows they are not prepared to act and follow through. Most people are simply going to have to learn a lesson of human experience and "bottom out" before they are convinced that there's no way to make the devil's way work.

The world, in effect, has been on a six thousand-year experiment trying to see if there isn't some way to make the devil's way work. Over the course of time we have tried every "ism," every political, economic, social, religious system that you can devise. People have tried all kinds of things, and none of them have really produced long-term satisfaction.

Jesus came teaching, preaching and speaking in parables. For those whom He was calling, for His disciples, He went beyond His public message. He spoke publicly and there was a point to what He said. But people understood it only on a certain level. Those that He was working with, He began to open up their minds to understand and began to explain further. The parables do make the meaning clear if you understand the point of what He is talking about, if you have the key to understand what the parable is about. And it is recorded for us here. We don't have to use our imagination, wondering what that parable meant—maybe it meant this or that. Jesus

defined what it meant. We are going to see quite a few of the parables as we go through here.

Mark and Luke are more chronological. Matthew skips around. Matthew followed chronology in only the most general of terms, but Matthew gives the most detailed account of what Jesus said on many of these occasions. Mark's account is more abbreviated, but is more directly in chronological story flow. Matthew tends to group everything Jesus said on a particular subject. He tended to organize his book by subject matter. When he would come to a particular point that Jesus taught, He would go through in a very general chronological sense; he would tend to bring in not only what Jesus said on the subject on that occasion, but things that Jesus said on that same subject at other occasions. So Matthew gives you the most detailed picture of Christ's teaching on a particular subject, but you don't always know exactly *when* He said it. You get the context of when He said it more clearly from Mark and Luke; you get more details of what He said from Matthew. That's why there are different Gospels. They tell the story from different standpoints. God used the natural proclivities of these individuals, and the way they organized the story gives us a more full and complete picture.

Let's go into the material that we have to cover this evening. Jesus had gone through the parable of the sower and the seed. We have commented on that one before.

Secrets revealed; nothing hidden: Mark 4:21-23 and Luke 8:16-17.

Mark 4:21-23, "And He asked them, 'is a lamp brought in so that it may be put under a basket or under the bed? Rather, isn't it put upon the lamp stand? Because there is nothing hidden which shall not be exposed and revealed, neither has any secret thing taken place, but that it shall be brought into the light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

The point Christ was bringing out was that some of these teachings that He gave about the parables were private teachings for the disciples at that time; it was not intended to be permanently hidden. God is going to open the understanding of these things to everyone, but He is simply going to do so at the time that is best for them. You don't have a lamp and put it under a bushel basket or a bed. Christ was not teaching these things for the purpose of permanently obscuring it from the masses. It was His purpose that all things are ultimately going to be revealed and made clear. Certain things are not yet for

public understanding, but the ultimate purpose is for all to understand. Those of us who have an advance opportunity to understand and grasp these things will have more required of us. God expects more of us because we have an advance opportunity.

We are responsible for what we hear: Mark 4:24-25 and Luke 8:18.

Jesus went on in Mark 4:24, “And He said to them, ‘Pay attention to what you hear; with whatever standard of measure you measure it, it shall be measured to you. And to you who hear, more will be given and added.’” He tells us that we are responsible for what we know. In a sense, the knowledge of God is dangerous knowledge. It’s dangerous if we don’t act upon it and use it.

Explaining parables to disciples: Matthew 13:36-43 and Mark 4:33-34.

Matthew 13:36, “When He dismissed the multitudes, Jesus went into the house. His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Expound to us the parable of the tares of the field.’” They heard the illustration and the example that He gave, but they didn’t really grasp the point He was getting at. He left the crowd to draw their own conclusion; the disciples asked Him to clarify it for them.

Verses 37-42, “And He said, explaining to them, ‘the one who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the Kingdom; but the tares are the sons of the evil one; And the adversary who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the completion of the age; and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and are totally consumed in the fire; this is exactly the way it shall be at the completion of this age. The Son of man will send out His angels and they will gather out of His Kingdom all sins and wickedness [KJV, “all things that offend, and them that do iniquity”—all things that cause offense, all things that are causes of scandal, all those breaking and transgressing God’s laws] and all those who live and practice lawlessness. And they will be cast into the furnace of fire, and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

What are we told here? Jesus said that the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a man sowing good seed in his field, and the enemy came and sowed tares in among the wheat.

Now that’s important to understand. In years past there were problems in the Church. One of the reasons that some became offended and even left as they saw certain problems is because they did not understand the parable of the tares. They saw

individuals—in some cases in fairly high places—that certainly were sources of scandal and offense. They became bothered and offended, even to the point that they left because they really didn’t grasp the point. If they had really understood the parable of the tares, they never would have done that. They would have recognized that Jesus Himself specifically said that the devil was going to sow a few tares in among the wheat. So why should we be shocked if we find a tare here and there? God permitted it. It serves as a test. Here’s what people lose sight of.

The bottom line is not impressing people, fooling people and kind of putting one over on everyone else. The bottom line is *God knows*. And when all is said and done, it’s not other people’s opinion that counts. When the end of the age comes, the angels are going to be sent out with specific instructions; they are going to gather out the tares.

He drew the analogy of the field. You have to understand the way that fields were sown in that time. They didn’t use some of the modern agricultural techniques. Seed was broadcast. They did not have the drill seed planter. Basically seed was broadcast on a field. In the early stages when it began to come up, it was hard to tell which was which. If you went out and started to try and pull up the tares, you could wind up pulling up good wheat. You didn’t always know. The easiest thing was that as it began to mature, the real thing brought forth fruit and the tares didn’t. As they matured and developed, it became very apparent which was the wheat and which were the tares. The tares were gathered out and burned, and the wheat was gathered into the barn. Christ used that analogy.

Then He defined it for the disciples. It was not a matter of putting an interpretation on it. Jesus defined it as to when it was and who the enemy was. He described that there was going to be a few tares sown in among the wheat and some wouldn’t be gathered out until the end came. But the point is God knows.

We need the perspective of faith to realize that God is not shocked and surprised at the turn of events. God’s not sitting up there wringing His hands wondering what to do. If we grasp this point, then we are prepared to deal with things as they come and with problems as they come. We don’t know everything or every detail of everything we are going to go through from now until the end of the age, but I think what we have to understand is that God has allowed things we

have gone through for the purpose of teaching us lessons.

There will be other trials and some of them may even be similar. We don't know every detail. We know the broad outline and the way the story ends, but we *are to learn lessons using the principles of scripture* so that we can understand how we need to deal with things when they arise and not be caught short. These examples and illustrations are for our benefit so we can know how we should handle it and so we can realize that there are tares. They are defined as those that offend and cause scandal, those that do iniquity and practice lawlessness—a lawless approach. They don't have the deep regard for the law of God. God knows. So, we see this parable of the tares.

Let's look here in this context. In Matthew 13, Christ gave another parable: vv. 31-33, He compared the Kingdom to a mustard seed, and then, v. 33, to leavening. The basic point was that what God does among people starts out very small and grows and grows. He compares the Kingdom first to a mustard seed and then to leavening. A mustard seed is a very tiny seed that grows up to a gigantic shrub. The leavening is something that just a little bit is put in with the flour and spreads until it permeates the entire dough. So He drew the analogy that the Kingdom of God, what God is doing among people, starts very small. It will ultimately spread out to great magnitude and great size, and it will ultimately permeate everything because that's the way God's truth, His government, the expansion of it, will ultimately permeate everything.

Isaiah 11:9, "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end...."

Jesus went on speaking in parables and explaining these things to the disciples.

In Matthew 13, He drew other parables.

Verse 44, He compared the Kingdom of God to hidden treasure, and, vv. 45-46, to a pearl of great price. The truth of God's Kingdom is compared to a priceless possession that someone really grasps the value of, and they are willing to forsake everything in order to have hold of it. He compares it to a merchant man seeking beautiful pearls; he finds one exceedingly precious pearl and liquidates everything he has to get that one because he knows that it has greater value than everything else that he has. He sells the rest of

his stock in order to get this one because this one is that pearl of great price.

Or there is someone who finds hidden treasure buried in a field; they go and sell everything else so that they can buy that field because they know that the treasure hidden there is of greater value many times over than everything else they have. He draws an example, 'Look, if you really knew that there was a treasure hidden on this acre of ground that was of untold wealth, you would liquidate everything you had in order to buy that acre. You would raise the money to buy that acre because you would know that the treasure hidden there was tremendously more than all the rest of it.' If we really grasp the value of God's Kingdom and God's calling, then we realize there is no price to be put upon it.

Here He compares the Kingdom to a fisherman's net.

Verses 47-50, "Again, the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a dragnet cast into the sea, that gathered together fish and sea creatures of every kind: which, when it was filled, was dragged up on the shore; and when they sat down, they gathered the good into containers, and the worthless they threw away. This is the way it shall be at the completion of the age: the angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall throw them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." There will be a sorting out process.

As we follow the story flow, we have the illustration in Matthew 8.

Matthew 8:18-22, "And when Jesus saw the great throngs of people around Him, He commanded to leave for the other side of the sea. Then a scribe came to him, and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever You may go.' But Jesus answered him, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests; but the Son of man does not have any place where He may lay His head.' And another of his disciples said to Him, 'Allow me first to go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me; and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

What did He mean by that? You shouldn't go to funerals or what? That was not the point of it at all. Here was someone who was a disciple, a student of His, and in effect said, 'I believe these things, but let me put off acting on it. Let me go and bury my father.' The idea was, 'I am going to stay at home and take care of things and run the farm as long as my father is alive. Once he is dead, well, then I will come and do these things.'

And Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead." The reference is to the fact that there were other relatives who were likened to being spiritually dead who could take care of the physical duties, but there were none of those that could fulfill the spiritual duties. In effect, this young man was using the fact that he had an elderly father at home as an excuse to not act on the calling that Christ had given him. Christ was saying, 'Let the spiritually dead bury the dead; let them take care of these responsibilities. You have plenty of others in the family who can fulfill those responsibilities, but they cannot do what you are called to do right now.' The man was offering excuses as to why he could not act on the calling he had been given now. He said, 'I'll do it later, after my father is dead—after a few years on down the road.' Jesus wants us to have a sense of urgency. He wanted those He was dealing with at that time to have a sense of urgency, not kind of thinking, 'Well, sometime in the remote distant future I will do these things.'

As we continue on through the account from Mark 4:35-38, we find that as evening was come, He pushed out in the boat into the sea after dismissing the multitudes, and a violent wind storm came up. The waves battered against and over the boat and filled it with water. And He was asleep on a cushion in the stern. They aroused Him and said, 'Master, we are dying; aren't You concerned? We are about to perish.'

Mark 4:39-41, "Then He got up and He rebuked the wind, and He commanded the sea, 'Silent! Be quiet!' And the wind ceased and there was great calm. And He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? How is it you don't have faith?' And they were terrified with great fear, and said one to another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"

'What's wrong, fellows, don't you have any faith?' It really impressed them.

This must have been quite a storm. A number of disciples were fishermen. They were men who were accustomed to the sea. They had been out on the sea and had been in boats. They had spent their lives that kind of way. They were not easily frightened every time a little wind blew and the waves came up on the sea. These men had spent their lives on the sea. If this storm was enough to scare them and they were losing control of the boat, you know that it was severe. Because they couldn't understand how He was sleeping through all of this, they finally woke Him up. 'We are about to die and here You are sleeping.'

He asked, 'What's wrong; don't you fellows have any faith?' No, they didn't have a whole lot, that's true.

Jesus Christ had a total, deep, complete awareness of God and God's power. He had that closeness, that proximity to God. When He was confronted with something, He reached out in faith and in confidence—He knew God was there. At that point in time, God wasn't that real to the disciples. Faith and sight are opposite.

Hebrews 11:1, "...faith is the evidence of things not seen...." People base what they believe on what they can see. That is not the most significant evidence. We are willing to take people's word; yet when it comes down to taking God's word, sometimes we really have to puzzle about it and kind of work up faith. Do you work up faith every time your paycheck comes? God's word we can count on.

Jesus casts out legion of demons: Luke 8:26-39, Mark 5:1-20 and Matthew 8:28-34.

They crossed over from the west side of the Sea of Galilee over to the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee to the area of Decapolis. Decapolis was the Roman province or section that had a certain amount of Jewish settlement, as well as a large portion of Gentiles. This was the area of the Gadarenes. They crossed the Sea of Galilee, and there was a certain man there who had been possessed by demons for a long time.

Luke 8:27-29, "...a certain man from the city met Him, who had been possessed by demons for a long time, and wasn't even wearing clothes, and didn't live in a house, but lived in tombs in the graveyard. But seeing Jesus he screamed out with a loud voice, prostrated himself before Him, saying, 'What have I to do with You Jesus, Son of the Most High God, I beg you that you don't torment me!' For He was commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (Because countless times it had seized him; and he had been bound up with chains and shackles, and had been kept under guard. But he would break the bonds...)"

There was an incredible supernatural strength when someone was possessed that way.

I remember various incidents. One that comes to mind is of a young woman, a fairly small young woman in a very similar situation, in terms of being possessed and going into these things. In one particular case when this came to a head, it was all they could do for four strong men to restrain her. It was everything they could do trying to restrain her, and they couldn't entirely do that in terms of trying to hold her down. Any

one of them would have probably weighed twice what she did. There was an incredible amount of strength, and yet when the demon was cast out, the problem was resolved.

That kind of thing is described here. When the demon would take over and seize this individual in terms of overt action, the kind of strength and things displayed frightened people and they were scared.

Verse 30, “And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion’ because many demons had entered into him.” He was actually possessed of more than one demon.

Verse 31, “And he pleaded with Him that He would not command them to go away into the abyss [the place of restraint and torment for Satan and the demons].” They said, ‘Look, our time isn’t up yet.’ They kind of panicked. The demons recognized Jesus. They knew who He was. They, of course, were fallen angels who had followed Lucifer (who had become Satan). They knew exactly who He was. They panicked when they saw Him. They knew He exercised the authority of God. They said, ‘Our time isn’t up yet; You aren’t going to put us into the abyss are You?’ No, He was not going to do that. He was going to make them come out of that individual.

So they asked Him permission, vv. 32-33, ‘If you cast us out of him, let us go into these swine.’ He did not forbid them to do that. They did and that served to panic the pigs to the point that they went charging down and over the cliff into the sea.

Verse 35, after Christ cast out the demons, the people came out and saw the man clothed and of a sound mind sitting at the feet of Jesus; it just scared them to death. They couldn’t believe it. Here was the guy completely sane. This kind of situation that we have here certainly represents God’s power over demon spirits. They have to be subject to God’s power.

Verse 37, a lot of the people around were so upset and panicked by the power that Jesus had displayed in terms of casting the demons out that they asked Him to please leave. They were scared to have Him around.

Verses 38-39, Christ told the individual to go back home (not to come with Him), and to tell the things that God had done. We find that this man, who was undoubtedly well known and had quite a bit of notoriety, went through that area. As he bore testimony of what Jesus had done, that had quite an impact on the people around.

Jesus returns to other side of sea: Luke 8:40, Mark 5:21 and Matthew 9:1.

Christ crossed back across the Sea of Galilee from Decapolis into Galilee.

Mark 5:21, “And when Jesus came across in the boat to the other side again, a great multitude was assembled to Him: and He was by the sea.”

Jarius requests healing for daughter: Luke 8:41-42, Mark 5:22-24 and Matthew 9:18-19.

We pick up the story here of Jairus. In Luke 8:41-42, a man came, whose name was Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and asked Christ to come and please heal his twelve-year old daughter who was dying.

Woman is healed of hemorrhage: Luke 8:43-48, Mark 5:25-34 and Matthew 9:20-22.

As Jesus went, we find in Luke 8:43, a woman who had a constant hemorrhage for twelve years. She had spent everything she owned on physicians and doctors and could not be healed by any of them.

Mark 5:26, “...she had suffered many things under the hands of many physicians, and all her means of support had been spent; and she didn’t benefit in any way, but instead became worse.”

Jesus worked very few miracles in Nazareth except, we are told, Mark 6:4-5, that He laid His hands on a very few sick folk and they were healed. This woman came up and God honored her faith.

Luke 8:48, “...‘your faith has healed you....’” You evidenced that faith.

Jarius’ daughter dies and brought back to life: Luke 8:49-56, Mark 5:35-43 and Matthew 9:23-26.

After this healing as Jesus was walking to Jairus’ house, someone came and said:

Luke 8:49-50, “And while He was speaking, one came from the ruler of the synagogue, saying to him, ‘Your daughter has died; don’t trouble the Master!’ But hearing this, Jesus answered him, saying, ‘Don’t be afraid: only believe, and she shall have her life restored!’” He said, ‘Look, don’t bother; there’s no point in coming because the daughter is dead.’ Jesus said, ‘Only believe, have faith, have confidence.’

Verses 51-52, “And when He entered into the house, he didn’t allow anyone to go in with Him, except Peter, James and John and the father and mother of the child. And they were all weeping and mourning over her. But he said, ‘Stop weeping! She is not dead, but only sleeps.’” There were all these people in there carrying on, and Christ sent them out; He got them out of there with all of their goings-on.

Verses 54-56, “But after He sent everyone out of the room He took her hand, and called out

saying, 'Child get up!' And immediately her spirit returned, and she got up: and He directed that something to eat be given to her. And her parents were amazed and awestricken: and He commanded them to tell no one what had happened."

Matthew 9:27-30, "And as Jesus was leaving there, two blind men followed Him, loudly calling after Him and saying, 'Have compassion and mercy on us, Son of David!' But after He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him and Jesus said, 'Do you believe and have faith that I am able to do this?' And they answered Him, 'Yes, Lord!' Then He touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith be it done to you,' and their eyes were opened...." Again, we see the matter of faith.

Verses 32-33, "And as they were leaving, suddenly they brought a man who was dumb, and was possessed by a demon. And when the demon had been cast out the dumb man spoke. And the multitudes were amazed...." This was incredible to them. In this particular case, this man had been demon possessed and Christ cast out the demon.

Verse 34, the Pharisees were very upset. Some people were impressed with the things that were going on. This really electrified the whole place.

Verse 34, "Then the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the prince and chief ruler of the demons.'" They said He was in league with the devil. This was their attitude.

Verses 35-38, "And Jesus went all around to all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every bodily weakness among the people. But seeing the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them, because they were wandering about, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then He said to the disciples, 'Truly the harvest is great, but the workmen are few. Beseech and supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send out workmen into His harvest.'" Jesus' attitude toward the multitudes was one of compassion. He had compassion as He looked and saw people wondering around not knowing the way to go. They were disoriented in their lives. They needed someone to guide and help them. Jesus had an attitude of compassion.

A prophet has no honor in his own country: Mark 6:1-6 and Matthew 13:54-58.

Mark 6:1-3, "And He left there, and came to His own country; and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath came, He started to teach

in the synagogue. But when many heard Him teaching, they were startled, and said, 'Where did this man get these things? And what kind of wisdom is this, which has been given to Him, that even such miracles are performed by His hand? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? And aren't His sisters here with us?' And they were offended at Him."

They were saying, 'Who does this guy think He is, coming in here doing all these things? Why we know Him. He is the carpenter. I remember when He built that house down the road. Why His mother lives over there across the village. Why we know her—been knowing her for years—and we know His brothers. How can He be anything great?' Notice the attitude of people: 'I have known Him all of His life.' What does that prove? I don't care who it is; somebody has known them all his life.

Verses 4-6, "But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet has honor and respect everywhere, except in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own family.' And while He was there He was not able to do many miracles, except He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them. And He was amazed at their disbelief and lack of faith...."

Again, we see the factor of faith in miracles. Faith is a pre-requisite to experiencing God's miracles; a lack of faith is a barrier. Even Jesus Himself could do very few miracles because people lacked faith. They didn't trust.

We have to recognize the extent to which we are in an age which Jesus characterized in Luke.

Luke 18:8, "...when the Son of man returns shall He find faith on the earth?" We live in an age that is so impressed with the things that man can do that it's lost sight of the things that God can do. An age that is so impressed with the power and ingenuity of man, that it's lost sight of how much greater is the power and ingenuity of God. It's very hard because faith is a simple thing, a child-like quality; the more sophisticated people get, the harder it is, seemingly, to have faith. It sounds like such a simplistic answer, yet we are told this in Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:6, "...without faith it is impossible to please God..." Faith is a very important matter. It is simply a matter of taking God at His word—of believing God.

In Mark 6:3, one thing that we should also note is that it is very clear that Jesus had brothers and sisters. This would come as a shock to a lot of people because according to Roman Catholic

teaching, Mary was a perpetual virgin. That does not come out of the Bible at all. She had at least six other children. There are the four brothers that are mentioned, plus sisters (plural, that means a minimum of two). So she had at least seven children. She could have had more depending on if there were more than two girls. That's what it says right here. Saying Mary was a perpetual virgin is just a matter of human tradition that people had, but it is not based on what the Bible says.

Jesus sends out the twelve apostles: Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6.

We pick up the story.

Matthew 10:1, "And when He called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave to them power and authority over the unclean demon spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every bodily weakness."

Verses 2-4, He enumerates the twelve and then Jesus commanded them.

Verses 5-11, "These twelve Jesus sent out, and commanded them, saying, 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not go into any city of the Samaritans: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out the demons. Freely you have received, freely give. And provide no gold, silver, nor money in your money belts, nor a bag of provisions for the way, nor two coats, nor extra sandals, nor a walking staff: because the workman is worthy of his food. And into whatever city or village you enter, search out who is worthy in it; and remain there until you leave.'" He gave them instructions.

Verse 16, "'Listen, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves: therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.'" As Jesus sent them out, the commission He gave to the twelve is made clear. They were to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. At a later time, the Apostle Paul was called as the apostle to the Gentiles, but the twelve were not sent primarily to the Gentiles. Their responsibility was to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Why is it that the twelve disappeared from view in the book of Acts a few years after the day of Pentecost? We read of Paul, but we don't read of where Thomas went, or Phillip, or John, or Andrew, or even Peter. We have a little bit of insight into where Peter went. We are told Paul went into the Gentile areas. Why did the twelve disappear from view? One of the main reasons is

they were sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and if God had clearly recorded where they went, then everybody would have known where the House of Israel was. Now we can piece together historical records, and it's a very intriguing tale. Perhaps we can go into it at a later Bible study. But that's where the twelve went—to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

They started out by going through the land of Judea in kind of a warm-up, but the real thrust of the commission was where they went in the future. Christ sent them out and told them not to make provision and to go forth.

Understand a little bit as to the setting. How did you reach large crowds at that time? There wasn't mass media or television or radio. When someone would come into town, they would announce a public meeting and people would gather in a village square. So the disciples, as they would go out two by two (Mark 6:7), would go into these villages. They would announce a meeting and people would come around. This was the way they would go to the public. And of those who heard them, if someone responded and wanted to find out more, they would ask them to come over to their house and have a meal, etc.

Christ said, 'If you get a response and somebody has questions, you go over there. You will be provided for. Don't feel badly to take their hospitality. A workman is worthy of his hire.' He told them not to put a charge on what they did. Freely you have received; freely give (Matthew 10:8).

God's Church or ministry does not charge for any of its services—funerals, weddings or whatever. Whatever it is, the principle is "freely you have received, freely you give." You can't put a price on the truth of God. We don't sell the literature. We put no charge on the services we render.

Some of the specific instructions that Jesus gave of not providing any expense money and things of that sort, we will find later on toward the end of His life as He prepared to send the disciples out after His death that He then modified those instructions. He told them, 'When I sent you out before, did you lack anything?' And they said, 'No.' He said, 'Now I am going to send you out, and this time I want you to provide for those things.' We will get into that a little later.

Christ emphasized that He was sending them out as sheep among wolves.

Matthew 10:16, 'Use your head; be wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove. Don't go out doing damage to people, mistreat or do things

that are going to take advantage of people in a wrong way. But be smart; use your head. Don't be gullible; don't be naive.

Realize people will deliver you up. You'll wind up being accused of things.'

Verses 18-20, "And you shall be brought before governors and kings on account of Me, for a witness against them and the nations. But when they deliver you up, do not be worried or anxious about how you shall speak or what you shall say: because it shall be given to you, at that very instant, what you should say. Because it is not merely you who are going to speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in and through you.'" 'If you are put in that kind of position, I will inspire you at the right time. I will put the words in your mouth.'

Verses 21-23, "But the brother will betray his brother to be killed; and the father, the child; and children will rise up against their parents and will cause them to be killed. And you will be hated by all people because of My name. But he who endures to the end, he shall be saved. But when you are persecuted in this city, flee into another: because truly I tell you, you shall not have finished preaching in the cities of Israel, until the Son of man appears at His coming.'" That is looking all the way down to our day.

Verse 25, "It is quite sufficient for the disciple if he become as his teacher; and the slave, if he become as his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call those of his household?" 'Don't worry about it if people criticize you. They have called Me Beelzebub; what do you think they are going to call you? They haven't liked Me; so what do you think they are going to think of you.' They criticized Jesus Christ and accused Him of being in league with the devil. We shouldn't be surprised if we are criticized.

People are sometimes amazed. They have written these things about the Church and say we are a cult. Well, what did they say about Christ? We shouldn't be surprised that people come out and misstate what we believe, take things out of context and accuse us of all kinds of things. They accused Him. We are certainly not entitled to any better treatment than what He received. If people took exception to someone who was perfect, and Jesus was, how much easier is it going to be for them to take exception to us, who are not perfect? If you can find fault with somebody who's perfect, you can be sure the world can find fault with somebody else. They found fault with

Him, so it's no trouble to find fault with the rest of them because they are not perfect.

Verse 27, "What I tell you in darkness speak in the light: and what you hear in the ear preach it from the housetop.'" You proclaim boldly what I have told you.

Verse 28, "And you should not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the life: but rather you should fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.'" Some misunderstand this. Some have used this verse to prove there's an immortal soul. Is that what it says? It talks about the fact that God will destroy both body and soul. So whatever the soul is, it is something that can be destroyed in Gehenna fire. It doesn't say anything about it being immortal. It describes it as something that will be destroyed or that can be destroyed in hell fire. The point is Christ told them not to worry about what people can do, don't be concerned and primarily focused on people and what some human being can do.

You had better be concerned about God and what God can do. Human beings can kill your body, but God will ultimately resurrect you. What you had better be concerned about is not the first death, but the second death. That is the one that not only destroys the body, but it destroys the "psyche." In other words, it destroys that aspect of the person that is the person, the individuality.

There is nothing conscious about the soul apart from the body. There is nothing immortal in that sense. It is used here to refer to that unique individuality that sets apart every individual that God preserves a record of. When they are resurrected they have the memory and the mind restored. Resurrecting someone is not simply a matter of recreating a body that looks like that person because what is it that makes you, you? Your mind, character, personality, and memories—it's all of the unique things that set you apart, your individuality. God maintains a record of that. A human being can take your life, but God will ultimately restore that life in a resurrection. Jesus said don't be worried about human beings; the most they can do is kill you with the first death. But what you'd really better be concerned about is God. God can render the second death, which is the destruction not simply of the body, but of any potential for eternal life. Destroying your individuality, your psyche, destroys your potential for life eternal. So in effect, don't be impressed with people and what

they can do. Be impressed with God and what He can do.

Verse 34, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” If Christ came to bring peace on earth, He certainly failed. Some of the most horrendous bloodlettings that have ever occurred in the history of mankind have occurred in the last two thousand years. He is going to come and bring peace, but He didn’t bring peace at His first coming. In fact, He said, ‘I didn’t come to bring peace, but a sword.’ What does that mean?

As a result of following Christ, people are sometimes going to be alienated from family members—even parents and children. There are times, that in order to follow Christ, you are going to be alienated from those human beings that are closest to you. In some cases you are going to have strife as a result of obeying Christ; persecution can come by family members.

Verse 37, “Anyone who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” –Putting other people before God. God will not take second place—not to father, mother, husband, parent, child or whomever. The first commandment is you shall have no other gods before the true God. Whatever we put first is our god. God says, ‘I won’t take second place.’ God wants first place or none at all.

Verse 38, “Anyone who does not take up his cross and deny himself to the point of death, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me.” Jesus said, ‘Take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Me. If you don’t do that, you are not worthy of Me. You have to be willing to pick up the load and follow the way I lead, if you want what I offer.’

God’s way of life is not a matter of convenience. On the one hand, Jesus said, ‘Come unto Me all you that are heavy laden and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28). God’s way is a way of release from many of the burdens of this world, but we also have to realize that it is not simply a matter of convenience to be a Christian. Christ did not promise us a convenient religion where everything would always be simple and everybody would think it is just wonderful because you are trying to obey God. That’s not the way it is.

The one point we want to recognize is if we do get persecuted, we want to make sure it is persecution for righteousness sake. Every person who is persecuted doesn’t mean they are persecuted for righteousness sake. Sometimes

they are persecuted because they brought trouble upon themselves, they shot off their mouth when they should have kept it quiet or they did certain things when they shouldn’t have. We want to make sure we are doing what God says so that any persecution that comes is there because of our obedience and not because of our disobedience.

Jesus said if you set your attention on trying to save this physical life, you will lose it. If your top priorities are trying to hold on to physical life and physical possessions, you are going to lose it. If that is the most important thing to you, and if you are trying to hold on to the things in the “here and now,” it will go through your fingers. If you are willing to sacrifice everything for God’s sake, in the long run you’ll prosper.

Matthew 10:39, “He who seeks to save his life shall lose it and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.” People who set their priorities on the physical, holding on to the “here and now,” are going to find this age passing away, and the things that have been so important to them crumbling to dust. But if our priorities consist of God and His way, we have a hold of something that will never pass away. It’s not that we shouldn’t take care of and be wise stewards with whatever God has blessed us with, but it is a matter of priorities. What comes first in our life?

Jesus went on to tell His disciples in Matthew 10:40, “Anyone who receives you receives Me; and anyone who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me.” He said the way they treat you is really the way they treat Me. And the way they treat Me is the way they treat the Father. So we show respect to God and to Jesus Christ by the way in which we treat those whom God sends. It’s a matter that the disciples were sent forth and represented Jesus Christ. They were sent forth and commissioned by Him. Respect that was shown to them was not simply to them as individuals, but it really was respect to the One who sent them.

There is the same principle today when an ambassador is sent by the United States to a foreign nation. The way our ambassador is treated is considered the way this country is treated. If our ambassador is treated with respect, that is a token of respect to this country. If our ambassador is mistreated or abused, that is considered an insult to the nation, and in some cases, has been a ground for war because an ambassador was abused. The way you treat an official emissary of this country is taken

personally. It is either an insult or a compliment to the nation. It's the same principle here.

Herod thinks Jesus is John the Baptist resurrected: Matthew 14:1-2, Mark 6:14-16 and Luke 9:7-9.

Matthew 14:1-2, "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and told his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and because of this the mighty miracles operate powerfully in him.'" Herod, when he heard about all these things, being the superstitious sort that he was, thought John had come back from the dead to haunt him. You remember the story.

How John the Baptist is beheaded: Matthew 14:3-11 and Mark 6:17-28.

John the Baptist had been put in prison. Herod's wife Herodias was very upset. She was angry with John the Baptist because John called things what they were. There had been this immoral situation going on—wife swapping and all that kind of thing. John the Baptist called her by what she was and didn't make any "bones" about it; this really upset her. Herod didn't particularly like it, but he knew John was telling the truth and was kind of scared of him. He figured John was a prophet from God and had a certain kind of superstitious respect, not to the point that he was ready to act on it, but 'this guy has something.' But Herodias was so angry that Herod had to put John in prison.

Then Herod had his birthday party, a big blowout; everybody was getting drunk and carrying on, and Herodias' daughter Salome was dancing. Now she was not a six-year old doing a tap dance. You read the account. It becomes very obvious that this was a very sensual type of thing. Here he was with his drinking buddies, all about "half-crocked," and here she came out doing one of these seductive dances—probably Middle East belly dances kind of a thing. Old Herod was getting so "beside himself" that finally he said, 'Hey, what do you want?' You get an idea of the corruption and immorality because her mother put her up to this. Her mother got her to seduce Herod, her own husband, in order to get her own way. You get an idea of the morality of the ruling family.

Verse 8, "But her mother instigated her to demand, 'Give me, here on a platter, the head of John the Baptist.'" Her mother had already told her what to ask for. She said, 'I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter,' and Herod was kind of "caught on the spot."

Matthew 14:9, "And the king was grieved and upset, but because of the oath and because of those who were with him at the table, he commanded that it be given to her." It bothered him. He knew that he shouldn't do that, but he had already "stuck his foot in his mouth." He had said this and everybody there heard it. Now he felt he couldn't back down.

Verse 10, "Then he gave orders, and had John beheaded in prison." He sent somebody out to execute John the Baptist. A little later when he heard about Jesus, he thought John the Baptist was back from the dead to haunt him (Matthew 14:1-2). This was the conclusion he leaped to. He was somewhat of a superstitious sort. He figured God was going to "get him." God did deal with him a little later. That provides an interesting story as to what God finally did and the way Herod met his end.

I think we have an overview here. That brings us up to the point of where we are going to be next time, which is the feeding of the five thousand. This brings us up to the Passover of 30 A.D. This brings us up to the final year of Christ's ministry. One of the things we will note is that the further along we go, the story begins to slow down and go into greater and greater detail. As we started out, we found that events were told in more broad and general terms; now it is going into more and more details.

So next time we will pick it up in the Passover season of 30 A.D., continue on through to the time through the summer of 30 A.D., and then right before the fall festivals. So we will continue to go through this series on the harmony of the Gospels.