

Bible Study # 34
April 11, 1989
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Matthew 14:13—17:23; Mark 6:30—9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1—7:1

Let's focus on the material we are covering this evening. We **are covering events between the time immediately before Passover in 30 A.D. and the fall festival season of 30 A.D. We are covering approximately a six-month period. Jesus remained primarily in the area of Galilee, entirely outside of Jerusalem and Judea.**

We pick up the story in John 6. In this particular occasion, all four of the Gospels have a parallel account.

The feeding of the five thousand: John 6:1-13, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17 and Matthew 14:13-21.

They all start out with the account of the feeding of the five thousand. Now John brings in a detail that the others don't. John focuses in very specifically on the holy days and festivals of God. John emphasizes the holy days and festivals because he is writing at a much later time when some were beginning to question whether or not God's festivals really needed to be kept. John was writing in the 90s A.D. At the time Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote, the Church was primarily Jewish and there really wasn't any question on the holy days; they did not make any special comment on them.

John focused the entirety of his Gospel on the things that Jesus said and did in the context of the festival seasons.

John 6:4, John makes plain, "And the Passover, a Feast of the Jews, was near."

Verses 5-9, it was in that context that Jesus looked up and saw a multitude coming toward Him. He saw this group of people there and He said to Philip, 'Where are we going to get all of the food to feed these people? Where are we going to get enough loaves?' He asked Philip that, not because He didn't know what to do, but He wanted to see what Philip would say. Philip's eyes got big and he asked, 'Feed them? Man, 200 coins worth of bread isn't sufficient for them; each one would just get a little bitty piece. There is no way we can feed this large a crowd.' Andrew said, 'We've already checked, and the only thing we can come up with, the only food out here, is this one little kid whose mother sent

lunch with him. He's the only one who has anything, and all he has is five little barley loaves and two small fishes. What good is that going to do?'

Jesus had an attitude of compassion. We find that the multitudes had followed them, and it was late in the day.

Luke 9:12 tells us that the twelve had already come to Him saying, 'You better send them home so they get something to eat and find provisions and lodging in the surrounding area because this is out in the wilderness.'

We are told there were approximately 5000 men. It doesn't say exactly how many women and children there were, but this is in addition to the 5,000 (Matthew 14:21). Chances are the group was predominantly male, but there would have been a number of families that would have been included as well. The point is it was a very large group, and the disciples didn't see any way to feed them.

Jesus had mercy; He had compassion. We find that He took the loaves and fishes, gave thanks, divided it among the disciples and the disciples distributed it to those who were sitting.

In John 6:11-12, we are told that when it was all over with, they collected 12 baskets of leftovers. So they wound up with a whole lot more leftover than they started out with. Generally, your "start-out-with" is a lot more than your leftovers, but this time the leftovers way outnumbered the "start-out-with." There was a lot more. It was a miracle. It is interesting to note a couple of things.

Luke 9:14-15, "Because they were approximately five thousand men. And He told His disciples, 'Make them sit in groups of fifties.' And they did so, and made everyone sit down."

Mark 6:39-40, we are told, "And He commanded all of them to sit down by groups on the green grass. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties." Notice the first thing Christ did was to organize the group. God's not the author of confusion. He had a big group here and He was going to feed them. The first thing He did was to organize it.

John 6:12, notice one other thing He did, "And when they were full, he told His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments which are left, so nothing will be lost.'" Notice that they didn't trash the place. He didn't walk away leaving a mess behind. I think it is a very small point, but it is one of those areas that give us a little insight into the way that Jesus Christ did things. Sometimes I have come into a bathroom

and have seen water splashed all over the place. Particularly in a public rest room, you see paper towels all over the floor and the place has just been trashed. People made a mess. Can you imagine Jesus Christ crumpling up His paper towels and just throwing them on the floor and leaving the place a wreck?

It's just a couple of things to show insight into His character. When He finished feeding the group, they cleaned up the area. They made sure no mess was left. Remember when they came into the cave and found the burial garments, they found the napkin for His head folded separately (John 20:7). Ever stop to think about that? He didn't just leave it in a crumpled heap when He left. He took the time for a mundane task of folding it up and leaving it neatly behind.

You might say, 'What difference does it make? I'd be so excited to leave that I'd just leave the napkin lying in a heap on the floor.' Well, maybe you would, but He didn't. It was simply a point of character that when Jesus Christ left something, he left it neat and clean. It's one of those things that give us insight as we read the Bible. There are all kinds of lessons; there are little lessons and big lessons to draw.

One of the things that we see by example and illustration is simply ways of doing things. We gain insight from that in terms of points of character, and we realize that it is something we can put into practice.

We have had problems even here in our Church hall. Deacons and ushers have a job trying to clean up the mess that's been left behind on the floor. Can you imagine coming in behind Jesus Christ where He had been sitting to clean up the mess He left behind? I know it's generally the children, not the adults, but isn't that a good opportunity to start with a little child—'Okay, now let's pick up. You have this mess here; we can't go off and leave this mess.' It's a good opportunity to teach them that you don't leave the place trashed when you go away expecting that somebody else will come in behind you.

Jesus goes up into a mountain to pray: John 6:14-17, Mark 6:45-46 and Matthew 14:22-23.

After this Jesus sent the disciples across the sea and He went off into the mountains.

Matthew 14:23, "And when the multitudes were dismissed, He went up into the mountain to a private place to pray...."

He wanted some time by Himself. He wanted some time to pray. The disciples had gone ahead of Him.

Jesus walks on the water: John 6:18-21, Mark 6:47-49 and Matthew 14:24-27.

John 6:18-20, we are told the sea was turbulent and they had been rowing about three miles; all of a sudden they were terrified. They looked up and it looked like somebody was walking toward them. And sure enough there was. Needless to say, this really frightened them when they saw somebody walking. Jesus called out to them and said it was He.

Matthew adds in a detail that the others omit.

Matthew 14:28-31, "Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You command me come out to You upon the waters.' And He said, 'Come!' And when Peter climbed out of the boat, he walked upon the waters, to go to Jesus. And seeing the tumultuous wind, he was exceedingly afraid; and as he began sinking he yelled out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand, and grabbed hold of him, and said, 'O you of little faith! Why did your thought waver?'"

Peter started walking, and then all of a sudden after a few steps, he looked down at that water, looked out there at all the wind and the waves. He thought, 'What am I doing; I can't do this.' Just about that time, sure enough, he couldn't. Glug, glug and down he went. Christ reached out His hand and pulled him up. He asked, 'Why did you doubt, Peter? Why did you waver?'

Now understand that Peter at least had a little more "going for him" than the others. He was the only one that even tried. You say Peter doubted, didn't have faith. Well, how far have you walked on water? I dare say he's gone more steps on water than any of the rest of us have. So we can't cast stones.

There is a point here. When did he get into trouble? —When he took his eyes off of Christ and on to what he could see around. That is the lesson of faith.

Hebrews 11:1, "...faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen..." If you can see it, touch it and taste it, that doesn't take faith because you have physical evidence. Faith is spiritual evidence. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Christ, he didn't have a problem. When he took his eyes off of Christ and looked on the around, he had problems. The immediate conclusion of when you look at the around is this is impossible, and there goes faith down the drain. This is a very important lesson: as we keep our eyes on God, on Jesus Christ, on the promises of God, we are focusing on that which will never fail or let us down. As we get our eyes

on what we can see and on the around, as we start focusing in on the other things, then we are focusing on things that will mess us up.

In John 6:22-25, the rest of the crowd wanted to come over, too. They waited there for Christ and figured they would catch Him when He got ready to cross. They waited and He never did cross. Finally some of them went over. We're told that they got aboard boats and came to Capernaum looking for Him. When they found Him, they asked, 'How did You get here? We were watching. We didn't see you take a boat. We saw the disciples leave without You. How did You get here before we did?' Well, He didn't tell them.

John 6:26, but He did tell them this, "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I tell you, you are not seeking Me because you have seen miracles, but because you ate of the bread and were satisfied.'" He said, 'I know why you are looking for Me. It's not because you have seen a miracle or heard a message. You are here because you ate an enjoyable meal. I fed you and you'd like to get fed again.'

Verses 27-35, "'Do not labor and work for the food which is perishable and temporal. But work and labor for the food which remains and endures throughout eternity, and for eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you: because God the Father has sealed Him with His own stamp of approval.' Therefore they asked Him, 'What should we do in order to work the works of God!' Jesus answered and told them, 'This is the work of God, that you should have complete trust and faith in Him whom the Father has sent!' Therefore they said to Him, 'Then what miracle will you do, so that we may see, and may believe and have faith in You? What are You going to perform? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'" Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. And truly the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, always give us this bread.' But Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life....'"

Notice the context is the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. The miracle in the feeding of the 5,000 occurred immediately prior to Passover. Now by this time, He is back in Capernaum, and it may very well be the message He gave on the first holy day. It's very possible

and it's certainly in the context of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread that Jesus began to explain that He is the bread of life. So when we take of that unleavened bread at the Passover as well as throughout the Days of Unleavened Bread, we understand that it is not enough simply to get rid of leavening—we have to replace it with something. Jesus Christ is the bread of life. It is not enough to simply try to get rid of the old habits, the old ways of thinking and the old ways of doing things that have characterized us in this world. We need to have Jesus Christ in us. We need to replace the old things with something new, with something positive, with something right. We need Jesus Christ living His life in us. He, we are told, is the source of our spiritual nourishment and survival.

Verse 35, He says, "'I am the bread of life. Anyone who comes to Me shall never hunger....'" Well, many of the Jews began to be upset because they didn't understand what He was talking about. They began to be offended.

John 6:44, He told them, "'No one is able to come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draw him and I will resurrect him.'" Only those that the Father draws can come to Christ.

Verse 48, then He went on to tell them, "'I am the bread of life.'"

Verses 50-51, "'But this is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that anyone may eat of it, and not die. I am the Living Bread that comes down out of heaven! If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live into the ages of eternity; and the bread which I shall give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'"

Verse 53, "'...except you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you cannot have life in yourself.'" In other words, 'You have to take Me in.' You have to consume, to absolutely take in Jesus Christ in His entirety. We are told He gave His life; He gave Himself—it was a total and complete sacrifice. We are to live by and through Him.

Verse 59, "These things He said, teaching in Capernaum in the synagogue." If He were teaching in the synagogue, it would have undoubtedly been on a Sabbath or holy day. In the context, it was most likely the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. He was giving a message on "What is this Bread?" He had just performed a miracle of multiplying the loaves, and now He began to explain that there was a spiritual analogy.

Verse 60, “After hearing this, many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard and difficult message. Who is able to understand it?’”

Verses 66-68, “From that time, many of His disciples went back, and didn’t follow Him any longer. Therefore Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Are you also desiring to go away?’ Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!’”

Many of those who were listening to His message were offended. Some began to go back and not follow any longer. Peter and the rest of the twelve didn’t really understand the point Jesus was getting at. They didn’t entirely understand what He was saying, but what they did know was that He had the truth. Peter said, ‘I may not understand what You are doing or the point You are making on this. This may strike me as a little strange, but I am not going to go away. Where would I go?’

Once you’ve found the truth, where are you going to go? This principle and the understanding of this certainly have helped some to endure and to make it through some tough times. Sometimes in the past when certain problems and things beset the Church, there was the realization as Peter had: ‘Well, Lord, where are we going to go; you have the truth.’

John 7:1, “And after these things Jesus was traveling throughout Galilee: because He did not desire to travel through Judea, since the Jews were plotting to kill Him.” So He remained in Galilee through this period of time.

Man’s tradition; washing of hands: Mark 7:1-13 and Matthew 15:1-9.

Mark 7:1, “And then the Pharisees and some of the scribes, came from Jerusalem, gathered themselves together to Him.” News of what Jesus was saying and doing was traveling far and wide. He was not coming down to Jerusalem, so they came to where He was. Some of them were very upset.

Verse 2, we are told, “But when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled and supposedly unholy hands, that is, unwashed hands, they criticized and found fault.” Now this really “bent them out of shape.” They had many traditions of this matter of eating with washed hands. With them it wasn’t simply a matter of hygiene; it was a matter of ritual purity. They viewed the problem was when they came into contact with other people, with sinners. That was just terrible. Before they would touch food that would go into their mouth, they had to make sure their hands were washed in case they had come

in contact with sinners. They had made a fetish out of some of the principles of washings and carried it to an extreme. In some cases they had taken the rituals of Leviticus that applied to the priesthood coming into the temple and had sought to apply it to individuals in their own home at their own table. That was literally the point they had gone to. The table was analogous to the altar, and the individual was to be as holy and undefiled as the priest. This was their thinking; they had taken it to such extremes in all of this. It really “bent them out of shape” when Christ’s disciples were not following all these rituals. They approached Christ about it.

Verses 5-9, “Then the Pharisees and the scribes demanded of Him, ‘Why don’t Your disciples conduct their lives according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with unwashed hands?’ But He answered them by saying, ‘Isaiah has perfectly prophesied concerning you, hypocrites, sanctimonious pretenders; for in this manner it has been written, “These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrine man-made religious precepts, injunctions and commandments.” As a result you have completely left out the commandment of God, and you cling to and follow the traditions of men, such as the washing of pots and cups: and you do many things like this.’ And He told them, ‘It is true, you have completely rejected and repudiated the commandment of God, in order that you may practice and observe your own traditions!’”

Christ said that the Pharisees were hypocrites. They paid lip service to God, but their actions belied their words. They elevated the importance of their own human tradition above the actual law of God. That still characterizes most of man’s religions to this day—most of what passes as Christianity. People would rather cling to human tradition than to observe the commandments of God. They elevate that human tradition.

Unwashed hands do not defile: Mark 7:14-16 and Matthew 15:10-11.

Mark 7:14-16, “And when He had called all the multitude to Him, he said to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing from outside the man, which entering into him, is able to defile him: but the things which go out from of him, these are the things that defile the man. If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear.”

What comes out of man defiles: Mark 7:17-23 and Matthew 15:12-20.

Mark 7:17-19, "...the disciples asked Him about the meaning of the parable. And He said to them, 'Are you also without understanding? Don't you comprehend that anything which enters into the man from outside is not capable of defiling him? Because it doesn't enter into the heart and mind of the individual, but into the stomach, and goes out of the body into the sewer, purifying all the food.'" In other words, what you eat, what goes into your mouth doesn't enter into your heart and mind. It goes through the digestive system and is eliminated, passed out into the sewer and is gone. It's simply a matter of time and it passes through the body. That is not what defiles and makes you spiritually unclean.

Verses 20-23, "And He said, 'Those things which proceed out of the man, these actually defile and profane the man. Because from inside the hearts and minds of men emanate evil reasonings and imaginations, adulteries, sexual debaucheries, murders, thefts, covetous desires and impulses, wickedness, deceit, evil permissiveness, an evil eye, blasphemy, haughtiness, pride, and foolishness! All these evils proceed from inside of the man, and defile him.'"

It's our attitudes, our thoughts and our covetous desires. It's the wrong thinking that is the problem. Some have tried to take this totally out of context and quote this account as proof that Christ did away with the laws of clean and unclean meats, which is absolutely ridiculous. There isn't any suggestion here of eating unclean foods. The subject is not even under discussion. It was the subject of the tradition of the elders, of human customs that the Pharisees paid great service to. The subject had to do with washing the hands, and Christ made plain that this was the case.

When you go back to the account in Acts 10, Peter was confronted with the sheet containing the unclean animals; you remember what he said?

Acts 10:14, "'Not so Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean.'" Now Peter was with Christ for three and one-half years, and there was nothing here at any time that made him think that he should eat unclean food. He had never eaten it with Jesus, so it was very plain that Jesus was not doing that.

Christ heals the daughter of a Gentile woman:
Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28.

Mark 7:24-30 tells us He went to the area of Tyre and Sidon and He came into a house. He didn't want anyone to know that He was there, but word

did spread. A woman who heard it appeared with her little daughter who had an unclean spirit. The woman, we are told, was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. (She was referred to as a Canaanite in Matthew 15:22.) In other words, the term "Greek" is referred to in this context as simply being "a Gentile, a Greek speaker." Specifically, she was a Syrophenician or Canaanite. This had reference to tracing back to the Phoenicians who were descendants of Canaan. She came in and desired that He cast the demon out of her daughter.

She evidently had certain knowledge of Him. Recognize, of course, that the people who lived here in this area were not normally those who practiced the religion of the Scriptures. They were of pagan background. Jesus Christ came specifically and His ministry was to His own—the Jews. He did not come ministering and taking His message out to other areas. Later, He sent the disciples out to these other areas. But God does things in an orderly and organized way.

It was God's purpose and plan to start with Israel, particularly with the Jews. They had retained the Scriptures, the knowledge of the law of God; therefore in terms of building the Church, it needed to be built around a group that was familiar with, understood and had access to the law—that group served as a nucleus. Then once it was established with them, it would begin to spread out and include others and eventually spread worldwide. But there was a logical reason as to why you start where you do. If you start with a group of people where the nucleus is totally unacquainted with the law and does not have access to the Scriptures, you have engendered confusion before you ever get started. Christ's ministry, we are told in the book of John, specifically and uniquely came to His own. His own received him not (John 1:11). But His ministry was to them. It was not here in Tyre and Sidon.

So this woman came in. He, perhaps, had come to visit an individual because certainly there were Jews who lived there a short distance away. He had come into someone's home, and He had sought to keep His presence private. He was not trying to get something started among the Gentile population in that area. But this woman had heard and had certain knowledge. She came there.

Christ, at first, made a statement to her.

Verses 27-29, "But Jesus said to her, 'First let the children be satisfied [I have come to the Jews, the children of Israel]: because it is not

proper to take the children's bread, and cast it out to the dogs.' But she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord! Yet even the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.' And He said to her, 'Because of this answer, go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" The demon was gone out and the problem was solved. There was an attitude of humility.

I think it is interesting to note that perhaps the greatest example of faith and the greatest example of humility that our attention is called to in the New Testament were both evidenced by Gentiles. You know what was said of the Roman centurion that Christ pointed out to His disciples, 'I have never seen this kind of faith, no, not in Israel' (Matthew 8:5-13). This woman had an attitude of humility. Christ, in that sense, was testing her. His ministry was not primarily to the Gentiles.

Some Gentiles had a kind of magical or superstitious approach, and anybody that they heard of and would view as having some kind of magical powers and connection with the gods, they would just add in to their collection. They worshipped many gods. They weren't picky. Christ was not going to get involved in that kind of situation. He was not there to deal with her and that group of people. But because of her persistence, humility and faith, He dealt with her. In a sense, she was dealt with ahead of time because she evidenced persistence, faith and humility. The example is preserved for us.

I think we need to recognize that we live in a society that does not value humility. Can you imagine the response that Jesus would have gotten with a statement like this in our society? This would not have been a very popular response, but there is a lesson here. God values things that people don't value. God values humility; our society and modern end-of-the-century America do not value humility as being something important. Why no! You have to demand your rights. Don't let anybody tell you anything. You just go charging on and insist on your way. You don't take anything off of anybody. And certainly don't have a humble approach. Well, God values humility, and this woman evidenced that humility. Christ was impressed and touched by her humility, her faith and her persistence; her daughter was healed.

We find that Christ continued to work these healings and these miracles. Mark 7:31-37 mentions Christ healing a deaf man.

Matthew 15:31, "So that the multitudes were awestruck when they saw the dumb speaking, the

maimed made whole, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel."

Jesus feeds the 4,000: Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-9.

Matthew 15:32, "But when Jesus called his disciples to Him, He said, 'I am moved with compassion and mercy towards the multitude, because they have continued with Me for three days already, and have nothing to eat. I am not willing to send them away fasting, because they might faint on the way back.'" Again, He had an attitude of compassion in dealing with people. He cared about people and was very much concerned with human beings and their problems, their difficulties and frailties.

Verse 38, "Now those who had eaten were four thousand men, in addition to women and children." Here we have another account of feeding 4,000 men in addition to women and children.

The Pharisees demand a sign: Matthew 15:39-16:1-4 and Mark 8:10-13.

Matthew 15:39, "Then after dismissing the multitudes, He boarded the boat, and came into the area of Magdala."

Matthew 16:1, "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, tempting Him, demanding that He demonstrate a sign from heaven for them." They said, 'How do we know You are whom You say you are?'

Verses 2-3, "But He answered them, 'When evening comes, you say, "Fine weather tomorrow, because the sky is red." But in the morning, "A storm is coming, because the sky is overcast." You hypocrites, sanctimonious pretenders! You know how to discern the outward appearance of the sky, but the signs of the times you cannot discern.'"

He told them, 'You can observe the signs of nature; you can tell whether it's going to rain or not—but you don't see the signs of the times.'

Verse 4, "'A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; but a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet.' Then He left them, and went away." They were going to have that sign impressed upon them in a special way within a matter of months.

Leaven (doctrine) of the Pharisees: Matthew 16:5-12 and Mark 8:14-21.

Matthew 16:5, "And when His disciples arrived at the other side, they noticed that they had forgotten to take loaves." They had forgotten to take any food with them. They just got on the

boat in a hurry and had forgotten to take any bread.

Verse 6, Jesus made the comment, "...Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Jesus took advantage of physical circumstances to make a point, and His disciples always tended to take everything He said in a very literal, physical way. Many times He was speaking in a figurative sense.

Verse 7, "But they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'He said this because we did not take loaves.'" Immediately they began inquiring about what He meant, 'Maybe He didn't want us to buy any bread from the Pharisees.' They were all murmuring about this.

Verses 8-12, "And knowing this, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you reasoning among yourselves, O you of little faith, because you haven't brought loaves? Don't you comprehend or remember the five loaves for five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered up? Nor the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered up? How is it that you do not comprehend that I did not speak to you concerning bread, in warning you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?'"

He asked, 'What are you guys talking about? Do you think I am worried about where we are going to get bread? Didn't I just get through feeding 4,000 people, and didn't I feed 5,000 a little earlier? You think I am standing here worried about where I am going to get bread and not want you to buy it from the Pharisees.' Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but to beware of the teaching and doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We are told in Luke 12:1 that the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. He was using leaven in a spiritual sense. He was contrasting the leaven of the Pharisees with the bread of life. We are to partake of the bread of life and we are told to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees. That is the spiritual lesson we need to have on our minds through the Days of Unleavened Bread as we studiously avoid the leavened bread.

We can get so meticulous in trying to remember, 'No, I can't have a doughnut. No, I can't have a hamburger.' We are thinking and concentrating on this. The spiritual lesson is we need to be spending just as much time throughout the year thinking and concentrating on avoiding the leaven of the Pharisees as we do on trying to avoid physical leaven for seven days. Just as we make it a point to acquire unleavened bread and eat it through the Days of Unleavened Bread, in

the same way, we need to be conscious of partaking of the bread of life, Jesus Christ, throughout our lives. Make it a point to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees and partake of the bread of life. The physical action we go through needs to impress upon us what we need to be doing spiritually.

Jesus' Church built on the Rock: Matthew 16:13-18, Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21.

Matthew 16:13, "And when Jesus came into the area of Caesarea Philippi, He questioned His disciples, and asked, 'Whom do men claim the Son of man to be?'" He asked, 'Who do people think I am?'

Verse 14, well, different people had different opinions. Some thought he was John the Baptist. Herod evidently thought that. He was kind of a superstitious sort. He thought that John the Baptist had come back to haunt him. That was his opinion. Some said they thought He was Elijah based on the prophecies in Malachi. Some said He was Jeremiah. Why did they say Jeremiah? Why not? It just shows that people have an opinion.

It may not make sense, may be ridiculous, may not have any point in it, but they have an opinion. 'Oh, I think "so and so"' —A "man-on-the-street" poll. What does that prove? Sometimes you need to take a look at what street you take the poll on—Skid Row or Wall Street. You can have a wide variety of opinions that could be brought out. But the point is people have opinions, and just because they have opinions doesn't mean that their opinion is valid. People take a Gallup poll. 'Who do you think this guy is?' Everybody had an opinion, but their opinions weren't right. They didn't know. But not knowing has never kept people from having an opinion. Far be it from them to let lack of knowledge get in the way of having an opinion. So Christ asked and He got different ones mentioning different things that they had heard people say.

Verses 15-17, "He asked them, 'But whom do you claim Me to be?' Then answered Simon Peter, saying, 'You are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God.' And answering, Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you Simon Barjona [Simon, the son of Jonah], because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"

'You didn't get this from listening to the man on the street. Flesh and blood hasn't told you this. You didn't get this from what other people said,

but My Father, which is in heaven, has opened your mind to really understand and grasp this.’

Verse 18, “‘And I also tell you, that you are Peter [which means “a stone,” and refers to Peter. Aramaic, “*Cephas*,” “a little rock or stone”; Greek, “*petros*”]. You are Peter [Greek, “*petros*,” “a little stone, rock”] but on this rock [Greek, “*petra*,” “a great massive rock,” and refers to Christ Himself] I will build My Church, and the mouth of the grave [the gates of hell—Hades] is not going to prevail against it.”

In other words, ‘I am going to build My Church, and it is not going to be swallowed up in death. It’s going to continue to exist.’ Whom did Jesus Christ build the Church upon? He built it upon Himself.

We are told in Ephesians 2:20 that the Church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

Now Peter described in I Peter 2:5 that we are all living stones. In a sense, what He told Peter was, ‘You are a “chip off the old block”—you have a certain rock-like quality.’ He had nicknamed him Peter or “rock” at an earlier time. ‘You have certain qualities; you have certain rock-like qualities. You reflect that and on this ROCK, I will build My Church.’

It is interesting if you look at the location of Caesarea Philippi. Just prior to entering Caesarea Philippi, there is a huge cliff that dominates the scene. At the base of the cliff, during the time of Jesus, a major spring gushed out from under the cliff. It was one of the sources of the Jordan River. It’s interesting. Here is the stream of living water where they were standing. Right there outside of Caesarea Philippi was a great cliff, a great rock, a “*petra*” that dominated the scene, and down at the base, there was a stream that gushed out from the base of the cliff that fed the Jordan River. There was a stream of living water and in that sense, flowing water.

It really kind of set the stage as Christ drew on the physical things that they could see to explain that He was building His Church. He was going to build it with Himself being the chief cornerstone. He was the ROCK on which it was built, and it would never be swallowed up. The disciples, of course, were going to play a part. They were part of the foundation. The prophets and the apostles make up the foundation built around and upon the chief cornerstone, which was Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:19, then He went on to tell the 12 apostles, “‘...I am giving you the keys of the

Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you may bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

“Binding and loosing” was a common legal term used among the Jews. It referred to, specifically, decisions made by the religious arm of the Sanhedrin, called by the Jews, “The Great Beit Din” or “The Great House of Judgment.” It is in this situation, sitting in the “Great Beit Din,” that the Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat. Remember when He told the disciples that the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat (Matthew 23:1-4)?

Luke 11:52, look at when Jesus told the doctors of the law, “‘Woe and misery to you doctors of law because you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.’” When He’s talking about the keys of the Kingdom, He’s talking about the keys that unlock the knowledge necessary to go in. He told the apostles, ‘I am giving you the keys of the Kingdom.’ A little later He rebuked the lawyers; He rebuked the keepers of the law—the ones who supposedly had the keys.

He said, ‘You have taken away the key of knowledge. You have locked it up where people can never understand it. Not only have you not acted on it, you have obscured the truth from others who were sincere and looking for it. Instead of unlocking things to their understanding, you have locked them up and made it a closed book’ (Luke 11:52).

He told the apostles that He was giving them the keys. He was giving them what they needed to unlock the knowledge of salvation, and He gave them authority to make binding and loosing judgments. If circumstances arise where the law had to be applied in situations and circumstances, they would have had to make decisions. They would be responsible to God for those decisions. There is a responsibility that those who make the decisions have before God.

Jesus rebukes Peter: Matthew 16:22-23 and Mark 8:32-33.

Christ was clearly not making Peter the infallible Pope. All you have to do is go down a few verses. Christ began to speak about how it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things.

Matthew 16:22, “‘And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God will be merciful to You, Lord. This will not happen in any way to You.’”

He said, ‘Let’s forget about this. This is not going to happen. I am not going to let anybody

do anything like that to You. This is not going to happen.’

Verse 23, “But turning to Peter, He said, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me: because your thoughts are not on the things of God, but on the things of men!’” Christ asked, ‘What are you talking about? Get behind Me Satan. You don’t know the things you are talking about. You don’t know what spirit you are because your thoughts are not the things of God.’ So again it shows here that there was nothing infallible in terms of Peter. Peter was a servant of God and one that God used.

You must lose your life: Matthew 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38 and Luke 9:23-26.

Matthew 16:24-25, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come in My footsteps and follow after Me, let him utterly disown himself, let him take up his own cross and let him follow Me. Because whosoever may desire to save his life shall lose it; but whoever may lose his life for My sake shall find it.’”

He emphasized that if you put “saving your own hide” first, you are going to lose out. He said if the greatest emphasis is on taking care of yourself, you are going to find that you are going to lose out even on what you are trying to do. If your greatest emphasis is on serving God and Jesus Christ, you are going to find God will take care of you. If you try to take care of yourself, you are going to get overwhelmed. If you put your emphasis on doing what God said and let God take care of you, He will certainly do so.

Vision of the transfiguration: Matthew 16:28-17:1-9, Mark 9:1-10 and Luke 9:27-36.

Let’s notice as we come down.

Matthew 16:28, “Truly I tell you, there are some of those standing here who will in no way experience death, until they have seen the Son of man coming in His Kingdom.” What does He mean by that? All you have to do is go to the very next verse. There is a chapter division here in Matthew. There is not one in Mark 9:1-2, which gives the same account. Man added chapter divisions at a later time. They were added in just to try to make the Scriptures more manageable. They went through and divided into chapters and verses and putting numbers on them. Generally, they are very helpful, but occasionally they obscure the point by making a break where there is really a single thought flow. This is an example.

Matthew 16:28, “...there are some of those standing here who will in no way experience

death, until they have seen the Son of man coming in His Kingdom.”

Matthew 17:1-9, “Then after six days He took Peter, James and John and brought them to a high mountain away from the rest of the disciples. And he was transfigured in their presence: and His face shined as the sun, His clothing became brilliant and white as the light. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to be talking Him. Then, speaking up, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord it’s good for us to be here. If You desire let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud enveloped them. And then a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found delight, and whom I have sanctified; listen to Him.’ When the disciples heard it, they prostrated themselves on their faces, and were exceedingly terrified. Then Jesus came, touched them, and said, ‘Get up and do not be terrified.’ When they looked around, they saw no one except Jesus alone. And as they were descending from the mountain, Jesus commanded and charged them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man is resurrected from the dead.’”

It was a vision—that’s all. Moses and Elijah were not literally resurrected at this time. But in a vision they saw the Kingdom; they saw Him coming in His Kingdom. They saw Him in His glorified state with Moses and Elijah standing there.

What does that signify? What are we going to be in the Kingdom? We are going to be kings and priests. Moses was the one through whom God established civil government among human beings. God used Moses to establish His kind of civil government. God used Elijah to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel and to establish an educational system. There were three schools of the prophets. God used Elijah and Moses in those ways.

We see, in effect, Christ coming in His Kingdom. Here is Moses through whom God organized human civil government, and here is Elijah through whom God established an educational system and restored the knowledge of the true religion. The disciples are standing here with Christ, and they were given in vision insight to see what it’s going to be like in the Kingdom. Undoubtedly, Moses and Elijah will occupy very high positions. Perhaps Moses will be the one who will be over all of the civil government. Perhaps Elijah will be the one who will be over

religion and education. Certainly, religion and education will be tied together in Tomorrow's World because in God's scheme of things, they are very much intertwined. Religion, properly understood, is education, and education has to be based on the true religion. So perhaps Elijah will be the one that will coordinate all of that. That at least could be speculated upon based on Matthew 17.

This is a vision. Peter quotes it later back in II Peter 1.

II Peter 1:16-19, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure...."

The "we" at the time Peter wrote that, referred to Peter and John. James had died years earlier. These two, Peter and John, were actually the ones that God used to put together the New Testament as we have it. This set them aside in a special way. They were given a certain insight into the future—into what God has in store for those who are going to be in His Kingdom and in His Family.

John the Baptist type of Elijah: Matthew 17:10-13 and Mark 9:11-13.

Then a little later, kind of in the aftermath, His disciples brought up the subject of Elijah.

Matthew 17:10, "But His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" They had been discussing earlier the fact that they believed Him to be the Messiah, and they asked, 'What is this prophecy about Elijah that the scribes talk about?'

Verses 11-13, "And answering them, Jesus said, 'Elijah shall truly come first, and shall restore all things. But I tell you, that Elijah has already come, and they did not know or recognize him; instead they did to him whatever they intended and desired.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them concerning John the Baptist."

Verses 11-12, now notice that He makes a reference here, "'Elijah shall truly first come and shall restore all things [future].' And He also said, 'Elijah has already come [past]....'" John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist fulfilled that before

the first coming of Jesus Christ. He fulfilled that prophecy.

Malachi 4:5-6, "'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.'" Christ was coming again, coming a second time, coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

I think that when we look at things, certainly many of us have felt very clearly that God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong back in the 20s and 30s to do the work of Elijah and to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. That's what He did. He restored the knowledge of the true religion in Israel to make a people ready and prepared for the Lord. The Church had always existed, but God raised up and revived a work to be done by His Church—in bringing Mr. Herbert Armstrong among His Church and raising him up as His servant in the latter days. God raised up a servant in the spirit and power of Elijah to do that work of which we are, let's say, the result and the continuation of the work that God began in this modern age through Mr. Armstrong. God used him to restore that work.

Jesus casts out deaf and dumb spirit: Mark 9:14-27, Matthew 17:14-18 and Luke 9:37-42.

Mark 9:17-22, "Then someone out of the crowd answered and said, 'Master, I have brought to You my son, who has a dumb spirit...And I asked your disciples, that they might cast it out; but they didn't have the power to do it.' Then He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me.' And they brought him to Jesus. But when the spirit saw him, immediately it threw him into convulsions; and he fell down on the ground, rolling about and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, 'How long has it been doing this with him?' and he said, 'From childhood.' And frequently it has thrown him into fire and into water, seeking to destroy him: but if you are able to do anything, please help us, have compassion on us!'" Jesus had compassion.

Verses 23-27, "And Jesus said to him, 'If you are able to believe all things are possible to anyone who believes.' And immediately crying out, the father of the little child, with tears streaming down, said, 'I do believe, O Lord; but help my unbelief.' Then as Jesus saw that a multitude was running and surging together around Him, He rebuked the demon spirit, saying to it, 'You

dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and you may never enter into him again.’ And after screaming, the spirit threw him into convulsions; then it came out. And the boy became as if he were a corpse; so much so that many said, ‘He is dead!’ but Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he stood up.”

Faith comes through prayer and fasting: Mark 9:28-29 and Matthew 17:19-21.

Matthew 17:28-29, a little later, “And when He came into a house, His disciples asked Him privately, ‘Why was it that we were not able to cast him out?’ And He answered them, ‘This type cannot go out by anything except prayer and fasting.’” That was the key of faith. The disciples lacked faith.

Mark 9:19, that’s what it said, “...‘O faithless generation....’” They lacked the faith to cast the demon out. Why did they lack the faith? They lacked the faith because they were not close enough to God.

That’s the point. How do we grow in faith? Well, one of the ways is by drawing close to God in prayer and fasting. When we draw close to God in prayer and fasting, we increase our faith; we build our faith. Mark 9 gives the lesson or key to healing faith.

This account brings us right up to the point that we are going to be next time as we pick up the story in John 7 of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the Feast of Tabernacles of 30 A.D., which brings us up to within six months of the end of Jesus’ human life and ministry. As we have gone through, we have noted how, as we close in on the end of Christ’s ministry, the account begins to go into greater and greater detail. Increasingly, God focuses in on that detail and on what Jesus said and did. There are many, many lessons that we can derive. There are many things that we can gain insight into—insights into the things that Jesus Christ taught, things that He said, things that He did, things that give us a basis by which we can live our lives, things we can put into practice in our lives and the things we must do.

Next time we will pick up at the Feast of Tabernacles 30 A.D. This will conclude the Bible study for this evening.