

**BIBLE**  
**CHARACTERS**  
**Throughout The Bible**

**By**

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## ADAM

**Text:** Genesis 1:26-31

**Introduction:** Adam was the first human son of God. In the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ found in Luke 3, verse 38 tells us that Jesus was of the lineage of Mary, whose genealogy went back to **“the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”** As the physical Son of Mary, Jesus Christ is also the **“only begotten Son of God”** (John 3:18).

As the first human son of God, Adam was made by God out of the materials of the newly created universe. It was to him that human life was first granted by God. Being the first man, he had no family background to speak of.

- I. What The Old Testament Says About Adam.
  - A. Adam was created by the Triune Godhead. (Genesis 1:26)
    1. In the Hebrew, the words **“us”** and **“our”** are plural, denoting God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
      - a. The conversation here is not one between God and some other part of His creation. (Ex. – possibly angels, other heavenly beings, trees, etc.)
      - b. The expression is used by One who alone retains creative power. (Colossians 1:16-17)
    2. Man’s creation was more an immediate act of divine wisdom and power than that of any other part of creation.
      - a. Previously it had been said, **“Let there be light, “Let there be a firmament,”** and **“let there be”** etc.
      - b. With man, the word of command was turned into a word of consultation.
      - c. In the former acts God spoke as One having authority, in the act of Adam’s creation, God spoke as One having affection (denoting planned relationship).
  - B. Adam was created in the **“image”** and **“likeness”** of God. (Genesis 1:27)
    1. Adam was in some way the concrete reflection of God, but also the abstraction.
    2. A coin might bear the **“image”** and **“likeness”** of an actual figure in history, but is not the actual figure.
  - C. Adam was formed of **“the dust of the ground.”** (Genesis 2:7)
    1. Matthew Henry writes, *“He was not made of gold-dust, powder of pearl, or diamond dust, but common dust, dust of the ground. Our fabric is earthly, and the fashioning of it like that of an earthen vessel.”* (Job 10:9)
    2. Since the workmanship of our creation (by the direct hand of Almighty God) exceeds the material used in our creation (dust), let us present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. (Romans 12:1)
    3. Herein lies but a preview of the workmanship involved in our *“new creation”* (II Corinthians 5:17) from sinners to saints in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
  - D. Adam received **“the breath of life”** from God **“and [he] became a living soul.”** (Genesis 2:7)

1. By God's breath, Adam became a spiritual being, capable of service for and fellowship with God.
  2. It is here that the significance of the new creation comes to mind. (Ephesians 2:1)
- E. Adam was placed into the Garden of Eden and given oversight of it. (Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17)
1. Matthew Henry continues, *"The place appointed for Adam's residence was a garden; not an ivory house nor a palace overlaid with gold, but a garden, furnished and adorned by nature, not by art. The heaven was the roof of Adam's house, and never was any roof so curiously ceiled and painted. The earth was his floor, and never was any floor so richly inlaid. The shadow of the trees was his retirement; under them were his dining-rooms, his lodging-rooms, and never were any rooms so finely hung as these . . ."*
  2. God had created Adam with a specific design and gave him the capacity for moral responsibility.
  3. Obedience to the commands of God would result in life and blessing.
  4. Disobedience would result in forfeiture of those things.
- F. Adam failed to keep God's command concerning the **"tree of knowledge of good and evil."** (Genesis 3:6-7)
1. The result of his disobedience was death. (Genesis 5:5, cp. Ephesians 2:1)
  2. Further consequences of his disobedience included:
    - a. Loss of innocence. (Genesis 3:7)
    - b. Hard labor. (Genesis 3:17-19)
    - c. Separation from God. (Genesis 3:23-24)
- G. Adam was sought out by God. (Genesis 3:8-9)
1. If the consequences of sin were ever to be overcome, it would have to be by the hand of God Himself. (Luke 19:10)
  2. Though guilty, Adam received the first promise of a Redeemer. (Genesis 3:15)
  3. God covered the shame of Adam's sin by a blood sacrifice. (Genesis 3:21)

## II. What The New Testament Says About Adam.

- A. Sin and death entered into the world by Adam. (Romans 5:12)
1. Remember, Adam had been made a **"living soul"** by the breath of God Himself (Genesis 2:7), but he sinned and died.
  2. A second Adam, Jesus Christ, is a life-giving spirit. (I Corinthians 15:45)
  3. The first Adam was earthy; the second Adam is heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:47-48)
- B. Sin and death were defeated by the Second Adam. (Romans 5:17-19)
1. In the first Adam all died; but in the second Adam, all can be made alive.
  2. Though all are sinners, there is an abundance of grace for all those who will receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion:** For the sake of His own character and law, God must judge sin; but for the sake of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, God is willing to forgive sin. Resulting from Adam's disobedience, the law of sin and death now operates over the entire human race, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has introduced a new law: **"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"** (Romans 8:2).

## EVE

**Text:** Genesis 2:21-23, 3:20

**Introduction:** Eve was the first woman to live upon the earth. She was a product of divine creation. She was not born, but was created out of Adam. She was by no means a “*lesser creature*” than Adam. The same God who made Adam of “**the dust of the ground**” also created her “**in His own image**” (Genesis 1:27).

Though Adam was made of dust, Eve was made from Adam’s side. The Hebrew word translated “**rib**” in Genesis 2:21 is elsewhere translated “**side**,” such as “**the side of the tabernacle**” (Exodus 26), “**the side of the Ark**” (Deuteronomy 31:26), or “**the side of the Altar**” (Leviticus 1:11, 15).

- I. Eve – A Purposeful Creation.
  - A. At the close of the sixth day of Creation, God had surveyed everything He had made and pronounced it “**very good**” (Genesis 1:31).
    1. Just prior to that announcement, though, something was found to be “**not good**” – man’s aloneness. (Genesis 2:18)
    2. By design, a woman was created to be a wife, companion, and helper to the man. (Genesis 2:20-22)
  - B. Together, man and woman were to be fruitful and have dominion over God’s creation. (Genesis 1:28)
    1. God’s creation mandate included reproduction.
    2. God’s creation mandate included dominion over the earth.
      - a. When Adam and Eve gave into the devil’s enticements, they lost their dominance over God’s creation.
      - b. When Jesus Christ, the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45) came to earth, He reasserted dominance over all that the first Adam had lost, including dominance over fish (Luke 5:1-7), fowl (Matthew 26:69-75), and animals (Mark 1:13).
  - C. Coming from the hand of God, Eve was created without sin.
    1. From the beginning of her existence, she was pure and holy.
    2. After their sin, Eve became known as “**the mother of all living.**” (Genesis 3:20, Psalm 51:5)
- II. Eve – An “**Help Meet.**” (Genesis 2:18)
  - A. Since God, in His creation, created them male and female, they were one flesh from the beginning. (Genesis 2:23-25)
    1. I Timothy 2:13 reminds us that “**Adam was first formed, then Eve.**”
    2. Matthew Henry writes, “. . . *the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.*”

3. In relation to Ephesians 5:18b, 21-33, one author writes, *“When a man is in fellowship with God and loves his wife as Christ loved the church, he treats her in such a kind, considerate, [and] thoughtful manner that she finds it easy to respect him and to submit to him as ‘unto the Lord.’”*
- B. Marriage is not just a civil contract, but a divine institution.
1. For completeness. (Genesis 2:23)
  2. For companionship. (Amos 3:3)
  3. For enjoyment. (Hebrews 13:4)
  4. For fruitfulness. (Genesis 1:29, cp. 9:1)
  5. For instruction. (Ephesians 5:31-32)
- III. Eve – Her Deception. (Genesis 3:7)
- A. The design of Satan’s attack. (Genesis 3:1-6)
1. Doubt. (3:1)
  2. Denial. (3:2-3)
  3. Deception. (3:4-5)
  4. Disobedience. (3:6)
- B. The avenues of Satan’s attack. (Genesis 3:6, cp. I John 2:16)
1. **“The tree was good for food”** – the **“lust of the flesh.”**
  2. **“The tree was . . . pleasant to the eyes”** – the **“lust of the eyes.”**
  3. **“The tree was . . . desired to make one wise”** – the **“pride of life.”**
- C. Though Eve was deceived, Adam willingly ate of the forbidden fruit. (I Timothy 2:14)
1. Wives, take heed to how you influence your husbands – toward or away from God.
  2. It is for this reason that husbands are placed as responsible leaders in the home.
- IV. Eve – Her Judgment. (Genesis 3:16)
- A. Sorrow – Despite the promise of blessing through the process of childbearing, there will first come pain and anguish through the same experience. (cp. John 16:21)
- B. Submission – While commentators differ widely on their interpretations of the woman’s desire and the man’s ruling, there is no doubt that the consequences of sin was introduced into the most intimate of relationships – marriage.
- V. Eve – Her New Testament Teaching.
- A. Contrary to pop culture, God is committed to the Husband/Wife relationship.
1. When the question was raised regarding divorce, Jesus answered using the same words that God had given to the first man and woman. (Matthew 19:4-5)
  2. Paul compared the Church to Eve. (II Corinthians 11:2-3)
  3. Paul further repeated the teaching of Jesus. (Ephesians 5:31)
- B. In their teachings, both Jesus and Paul confirmed the Genesis narrative.

**Conclusion:** Though there are those who would tell us otherwise, Adam and Eve were real people with real emotions. With the passing of time, they had real children and they suffered real heartaches. Satan, too, is very real, but he continues to be subtle in his approach to tempt us away from God. At all times we must be aware of his devices (II Corinthians 2:11) and cling to Christ who laid down His life for us.

**CAIN, ABEL AND SETH**

**Text:** Genesis 4:1-16, 25

**Introduction:** After God created Adam and Eve, He said to them, **“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”** (Genesis 1:28). Unto Eve, He said, in Genesis 3:16, **“Thou shalt bring forth children.”** In fulfillment of God’s command, Genesis 5:4 tells us that Adam and Eve **“begat sons and daughters.”** The first of these were Cain, Abel and Seth.

- I. Cain.
  - A. The first son of Adam and Eve.
    1. Being born after the transgression, he was *“born in sin.”* (Cp. Psalm 51:5)
    2. The fallen nature of this first child is quickly noticed.
  - B. The farmer.
    1. Adam taught his sons that they were to work as co-laborers with God as part of God’s creation mandate. (Genesis 1:26-31, cp. Colossians 3:22-23)
    2. Perhaps his sons asked Adam why their work was so difficult, and he had to explain to them that God had cursed the ground because of his disobedience. (Genesis 3:17-19)
    3. This question would have also given Adam the opportunity to remind his sons of God’s promise of a Redeemer. (Genesis 3:15)
  - C. The worshiper.
    1. Adam and Eve had learned to worship God before sin brought its curse upon them.
      - a. Certainly they taught their children about the Lord and the importance of worshipping Him.
      - b. Warren Wiersbe – *“Workers need to be worshipers or they may become idolaters, focusing on the gifts and not the Giver, and forgetting that God gives the power to work and gain wealth (Deuteronomy 8:10-20).”*
    2. God rejected Cain’s offering.
      - a. Cain wasn’t rejected because of his offering, but his offering was rejected because of Cain – Cain’s heart wasn’t right with God. (I John 3:11-12)
      - b. In later years, the Law of Moses prescribed offerings of grain, so from the beginning such sacrifices were probably acceptable.
      - c. Even if Cain had brought an animal sacrifice, it wouldn’t have been accepted because of the state of Cain’s heart. (I Samuel 15:22)
  - D. The murderer.
    1. Anger is a powerful emotion that can lead to violence. (Matthew 5:21-22)
      - a. How soon after his worship was rejected did Cain entice his brother away from home and kill him is unknown.
      - b. He probably murdered his brother in his heart many times before he actually committed the deed.
    2. Cain was a child of the devil (I John 3:12), which means he was a murderer and liar (John 8:44).

- a. He lied to his brother when he enticed him to the place where he killed him.
- b. He lied to himself in thinking that he could do such an evil deed and get away with it.
- c. He even tried to lie to God in trying to cover up his deed.
- 3. The more you think about Cain's sin, the more heinous it becomes.
  - a. The murder wasn't motivated by passion, but was carefully premeditated.
  - b. He didn't kill a stranger in defense; he murdered his own brother out of envy.
  - c. Furthermore, Cain did it after being at the altar to worship God and in spite of God's warning and promise.
  - d. Finally, once the horrible deed was done, Cain took it all very lightly and tried to lie his way out of it.
- E. The fugitive.
  - 1. Cain had defiled the ground with his brother's blood, and now the ground wouldn't work for him.
    - a. Cain never repented of his sins; his words only reveal remorse and regret.
    - b. His only concern was his punishment, not his character.
  - 2. God, in His mercy, set an unknown mark on Cain to protect him from the assaults of others who might want to kill him.

## II. Abel.

- A. The second son of Adam and Eve became a shepherd.
  - 1. The Lord accepted Abel's offering.
  - 2. His offering showed his surrendered heart to God – by offering nothing which he had made, but offering something God Himself had given him to care for.
- B. Abel speaks to God's people today by his sacrifice and his shed blood. (Heb. 12:24)
  - 1. The blood of Abel speaks from the earth; Christ's blood speaks from heaven.
  - 2. Abel's blood cries out for justice; Christ's blood speaks of justice satisfied at the Cross.
  - 3. Abel's blood declared Cain's guilt and made him a wanderer; Christ's blood speaks of grace and forgiveness and reconciles believing sinners to God.

## III. Seth.

- A. God gave Adam and Eve another son whose name means "*appointed*."
  - 1. Seth became the "*appointed*" one to take the place of Abel.
  - 2. God did not replace Abel with Seth, for no child can ever be replaced.
- B. The Godly line, through which the "**Seed of the woman**" (Genesis 3:15) was to come, was reestablished through Seth.
  - 1. Eve gladly accepted Seth as a special gift from God.
  - 2. It was through this seed that our Substitute (Jesus Christ) came who died for our sins.

**Conclusion:** A couple of quick lessons to share from these brothers. Number one, parenting has always been a difficult thing to do. Second, any sacrifice being made to God should first be a matter of the heart. Third, we DO have a responsibility for our "*brothers*." And finally, the temptation to sin is always waiting at the door.

## NOAH

**Text:** Genesis 6:1-14

**Introduction:** Nothing is known of the early life of Noah except that he was the son of Lamech (Genesis 5:28-29), a descendant from the line of Seth, and the tenth generation from Adam. If his genealogy does not allow for any gaps, Lamech was only 56 years old when Adam died. Noah was 500 years old when the first of his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, were born.

I. Noah's Calling.

- A. He was a hero of faith who obeyed God by building the Ark. (Hebrews 11:7)
  - 1. He believed the warning of God about coming judgment.
  - 2. With the exception of his family, everyone else around Noah died in a catastrophic flood.
- B. He was a **“preacher of righteousness”** for 120 years. (Cp. II Peter 2:5)
  - 1. The world had mocked and ridiculed Noah's faith and belief in God's warning of judgment, but God vindicated his faith.
  - 2. William Barclay writes, *“Noah's faith was a judgment on others. That is why, at least in one sense, it is dangerous to be a Christian. It is not that the Christian is self-righteous; it is not that the Christian is censorious; it is not that the Christian goes about finding fault with other people; it is not that the Christian says: ‘I told you so.’ It often happens that the Christian simply by being himself is passing judgment on other people. . . . There is a danger in goodness, for in the light of goodness evil stands condemned.”*

II. Noah's Times.

- A. Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption.
  - 1. Noah did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God.
  - 2. He stood out as the only one of his days who **“walked with God”** (Genesis 6:9), as was true of his great-grandfather, Enoch (Genesis 5:22).
- B. When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world, He disclosed to Noah His intention to destroy the world by a flood. (Amos 3:7)
  - 1. With unswerving confidence in the Word of God, Noah started building the Ark.
  - 2. During this time of grace, Noah continued to preach God's judgment and mercy, warning the ungodly of their approaching doom.
  - 3. For 120 years the construction continued. (I Corinthians 15:58)
- C. God has been described as the most tragic figure in the Bible. (Genesis 6:6)
  - 1. God is repeatedly disappointed by His favorite creature – the human being.
  - 2. The beginning of Genesis is a series of successive frustrations on the part of God, who sets about creating a world that will be good for humanity, only to find that they thwart His plans for the world to such an extent that He ultimately destroys it.

### III. Noah's Faith.

- A. **“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”** (Genesis 6:8).
  - 1. This is the first mention of **“grace”** in the Scripture.
  - 2. **“Grace”** means *“the favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person does.”*
  - 3. Simply defined, **“grace”** means *“God's unmerited favor.”* (Cp. Ephesians 2:8-9)
- B. **“Noah walked with God”** (Genesis 6:9).
  - 1. He was a just and sincere man.
  - 2. He lived righteously in spite of the surrounding sin about him.
- C. Noah believed God and **“according to all that God commanded him, so he did.”** (Genesis 6:14-22, 7:5)
  - 1. He built the Ark according to God's plans.
  - 2. He gathered the animals as God instructed. (Genesis 7:1-10)
  - 3. He and his wife, along with his three sons and their wives, all entered into the Ark to ride out the judgment of God.
  - 4. Because of these things, Noah is listed as one of the great heroes of the faith.

### IV. Noah's Worship.

- A. After the flood (Genesis 8:1-12), Noah graciously offered a sacrifice to the Lord. (Genesis 8:13-22)
- B. In response, the Lord made a covenant with Noah.
  - 1. God would not **“curse the ground any more for man's sake”** (Genesis 8:21).
  - 2. The *“being fruitful”* mandate was repeated. (Genesis 9:1-2)
  - 3. Meat would be added to man's diet. (Genesis 9:3-4)
  - 4. Human government was established. (Genesis 9:5-6)
  - 5. The earth would never again be destroyed by water. (Genesis 9:7-11)
  - 6. The token of all this would be the rainbow – God's signature. (Genesis 9:12-17)

### V. Noah's Failure. (Genesis 9:20-21)

- A. After the flood, Noah became a farmer.
- B. His drunkenness became a prelude to a curse that would be invoked upon Ham's son, Canaan, and his descendants.
- C. The Bible is silent about the rest of Noah's life after the Flood, except to say that he died at the age of 950 years. (Genesis 9:28-29)

### VI. Noah's Lessons For Us.

- A. Jesus compares the days of Noah to His Second Coming. (Matthew 24:36-39)
- B. Noah was saved from judgment by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)
- C. The Ark is a perfect picture of Jesus Christ. (Cp. Ephesians 1:13-14)
- D. *“Good beginnings don't guarantee good endings!”*

**Conclusion:** Noah was a righteous man, a builder of the Ark, and a preacher of righteousness whom God protected and delivered by grace. With all his faults, he still became a member of God's great hall of faith. As we live in anticipation of the Lord's coming, may we strive to walk in righteousness and finish well. (II Timothy 4:7)

**ABRAHAM**

**Text:** Genesis 12:1-3

**Introduction:** Abraham (Abram) was born to Terah in Ur of the Chaldees (southern Iraq), a city devoted to Nannar, the moon-god. He was born in the line of Shem, placing him in the line of Jesus Christ (Genesis 11:10-26). From the record we find him to be close to his family. He married his half-sister, Sarah (Sarai). When his brother Haran died, Abraham and Sarah, along with Terah, his father, Lot (Haran's son, Abraham's nephew) migrated north to Haran (northern Syria) **"and dwelt there"** (Genesis 11:31).

Born to the Adamic race, Abraham was called of God out of idolatry (Joshua 24:2) and became the first Hebrew (Genesis 14:13). He uttered no prophecy, wrote no book, and gave no laws, yet in the sovereign will of God Abraham was chosen to be the heir of God's unconditional covenant.

I. What The Old Testament Says About Abraham.

A. His call. (Genesis 12:1)

1. God's call to Abraham was simple: **"Now the LORD had said unto Abram . . ."**
2. God's call to Abraham resulted in four things:
  - a. Rootlessness – **" . . . get thee out of thy country."**
  - b. Loneliness – **" . . . get thee . . . from thy kindred."**
  - c. Insecurity – **" . . . get thee . . . from thy father's house."**
  - d. Uncertainty – **" . . . get thee . . . unto a land that I will shew thee."**

B. His covenant with God. (Genesis 12:2-3)

1. God's covenant was unconditional – **"I will . . ."**
  - a. This covenant is declared to be **"everlasting."** (Genesis 17:7)
  - b. This covenant was solemnized by a ritual symbolizing the shedding of blood. (Genesis 15:1-18)
2. The particulars of the Abrahamic Covenant are reaffirmed in three other covenants.
  - a. LAND – The Palestinian Covenant. (Deuteronomy 29:10-30:20)
  - b. SEED – The Davidic Covenant. (II Samuel 7:4-16)
  - c. BLESSING – The New Covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-40)

C. His obedience. (Genesis 12:4-8)

1. By faith, Abraham departed from Haran and went to the land of Canaan.
2. In Abraham we see a life of faith, trusting in divine guidance and believing divine promises.
3. In the land, Abraham built an altar unto the Lord and worshiped Him.

D. His journey into Egypt. (Genesis 12:9-20, cp. Genesis 20:1-14)

1. Without any command of God, Abraham went down into Egypt because of the famine in Canaan.
2. While there, Abraham faltered, failed, and lied about his wife
3. Noticeably absent in Egypt was any worship of God.

- E. His restoration. (Genesis 13:1-4)
  - 1. He went back to the place where he had built an altar **“at the first.”**
  - 2. God always restores us back to our position of forgiveness when we ask.
- F. His rescue of Lot. (Genesis 14:1-2, 11-12)
  - 1. In Hebron, Abraham was at home when he received word of a war between four Eastern kings and five kings of Canaan.
    - a. They captured the people of Sodom, and Lot was one of the captives.
    - b. Abraham took his 318 trained servants by night and rescued Lot and his goods.
  - 2. Following the victory, the mysterious king and priest of God, Melchizedek (the pre-incarnate Christ), appears and blesses Abraham. (Genesis 14:17-24)
    - a. The king of Sodom recognized Abraham’s strength.
    - b. The king of Salem, Melchizedek, recognized the Lord’s strength.
    - c. Abraham responds by giving Melchizedek **“tithes of all.”**
- G. His reaffirmation. (Genesis 15:1-5)
  - 1. God’s promise of a great nation to Abraham is still hard for him to believe.
  - 2. God reconfirms in verse 18 that **“unto thy seed HAVE [present tense] I given . . .”**
- H. His aid to God. (Genesis 16:1-3)
  - 1. Abraham made the mistake of rushing into a relationship without first inquiring of God.
  - 2. Hagar would give birth to Ishmael, resulting in unending strife in the family.
- I. His name changed. (Genesis 17:5, cp. 17:15)
  - 1. God renews His covenant with Abraham when he is 99 years old. (17:2-8)
  - 2. The Lord names Abraham’s coming **“seed”** Isaac. (17:19)
- J. His intercession. (Genesis 18:20-33)
  - 1. Previously, Abraham had saved Lot by doing.
  - 2. Presently, Abraham saves Lot by praying.
- K. His **“seed,”** Isaac, is born. (Genesis 21:1-3)
  - 1. When Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born.
  - 2. God keeps His promises **“as the set time.”**
- L. His test of faith. (Genesis 22:1-8)
  - 1. God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah.
  - 2. Abraham’s faith is equal to the test.

## II. What The New Testament Says About Abraham.

- A. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not following Abraham’s example. (John 8:33-39)
- B. Stephen confirmed all that God had said to Abraham. (Acts 7:2-8)
- C. Paul declared the promise to Abraham was not by law, but by faith. (Romans 4:13)
- D. Abraham is called **“the Friend of God.”** (James 2:20-23)

**Conclusion:** The most important statement made in regard to Abraham is found in Genesis 15:6, which is repeated four times in the New Testament (Romans 3:22, 4:3, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23), **“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”** Raised among idolatry, exposed to many forms of paganism, and facing many lapses in his life, Abraham found righteousness solely by believing the LORD.

## MELCHIZEDEK

**Text:** Genesis 14:17-24

**Introduction:** If you were asked to name the most important people in the Old Testament, Melchizedek's name would probably not appear toward the top your list. He appears only once in the Old Testament narrative, in Genesis 14, and is then briefly mentioned again in Psalm 110:4. You could hardly call this "*top billing*," but the Holy Spirit used those two passages to present a most important truth: the priesthood of Jesus Christ is far superior to that of Aaron because "**the order of Melchisedec**" is superior to "**the order of Aaron**" (Hebrews 7:11), or the Levitical priesthood.

- I. What The Old Testament Says About Melchizedek.
  - A. Melchizedek's sudden appearance and disappearance in the Book of Genesis are somewhat mysterious.
    1. After a victory over four invading kings from the East, Abraham (Abram) headed home with Lot, whom he had rescued from a kidnaping. (Genesis 14:1-16)
      - a. The king of Sodom came out to propose that Abraham might return the captured people to him but retain the spoils of battle. (Genesis 14:17)
      - b. Abraham refused to retain anything because he had previously sworn an oath "**unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.**" (Genesis 14:21-24)
    2. Melchizedek, "**king of Salem**" (Jerusalem, cp. Psalm 76:2) and Abraham first met after Abraham's defeat of Chedorlaomer and his three allies. (Genesis 14:18-20)
      - a. Melchizedek presented "**bread and wine,**" which would be symbolic of the Lord's Supper and the death of Jesus Christ, to Abraham and his weary men, demonstrating friendship and religious kinship.
      - b. He bestowed a blessing on Abraham in the name of EL ELYON – "**the most high GOD**" – and praised God for giving Abraham victory in battle.
    3. Abraham presented Melchizedek with a "**tithe**" of all the booty he had gathered.
      - a. By this act Abraham indicated that he recognized Melchizedek as a fellow-worshiper of the one true God as well as "**the priest of the most high God.**"
      - b. Note that this act of tithing predates the giving of the Law to Moses.
      - c. Melchizedek's existence also shows that there were people, other than Abraham and his family, who served the true God.
  - B. In Psalm 110, a Messianic psalm written by David (Matthew 22:43), Melchizedek is seen as a type of Christ in verse 4.
    1. This theme is repeated in the Book of Hebrews, where both Melchizedek and Christ are considered kings of "**righteousness**" and "**peace**" (Hebrews 7:2).
    2. By citing Melchizedek and his unique priesthood as a type, the writer shows that Christ's new priesthood is superior to the old Levitical order and the priesthood of Aaron.

- II. What The New Testament Says About Melchizedek.
- A. Jesus, not of the tribe of Levi or Aaron, is called **“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”** (Hebrews 5:1-10, esp. verse 6).
1. No Old Testament priest ministered forever because each priest died and relinquished the office to his successor.
    - a. At least six times the writer of the Book of Hebrews affirms that Christ’s high priesthood is **“for ever.”** (5:6, 6:20, 7:17, 7:21, 7:24, 7:28)
    - b. Since Jesus is a Priest forever, He gives His people salvation forever. (Hebrews 7:23-28)
  2. The reason Jesus Christ can be **“a priest for ever”** is that He belongs to the **“order of Melchisedec.”**
    - a. As far as the Old Testament record is concerned, Hebrews 7:1-3 suggests that Melchizedek did not die.
    - b. Many Bible scholars believe that Melchizedek was a *“Theophany,”* or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. (Cp. Judges 13:15-21, Daniel 3:19-25)
- B. Hebrews 7:1-10 presents a full portrait of Melchizedek.
1. Verse 3 describes him as being **“without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life . . .”**
    - a. So Christ was without father on earth as to His humanity, and without mother in heaven as to His deity.
    - b. Jesus is **“the only begotten of the Father”** (John 1:14).
  2. Verse 4 asks us to **“consider how great this man was”** who received tithes not only from Abraham, but also from Aaron and Levi as well. (Cp. verses 9 and 10)
- C. There is a need for an everlasting priesthood. (Hebrews 7:11-28)
1. The Aaronic priesthood made nothing perfect in and through the Law. (7:11-13)
    - a. Jesus came from Judah which had nothing to do with the priesthood. (7:14)
    - b. Jesus came, **“not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life”** (7:15-16).
  2. Though the Aaronic priests died, Jesus lives forever. (7:23-24)
    - a. Jesus became a High Priest because of us. (7:25)
    - b. Jesus offered Himself as the one sacrifice once. (7:26-28)
- D. Melchizedek is a shadow of Jesus because:
1. He was a king-priest; so is Jesus.
    - a. In the Old Testament, the throne and altar were separated.
    - b. King Uzziah wanted to also be a priest, and God judged Him for it. (II Chronicles 26:16-19)
    - c. Only in Jesus Christ and in Melchizedek were the two offices combined.
  2. Melchizedek was the king of Salem; Jesus will be the King of Jeru-salem.
  3. Melchizedek had no recorded beginning and ending; Jesus was in the beginning and will continue into everlasting.
  4. Melchizedek was made a high priest by the Most High God; Jesus IS the High Priest of the Most High God.

**Conclusion:** Because Jesus is our High Priest forever, we have the continued privilege of entering into God’s presence through His intercession on our behalf. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

## ISAAC

**Text:** Genesis 17:19-21

**Introduction:** Isaac was the only son of Abraham by his wife Sarah and father of Jacob and Esau. God promised to make Abraham's descendants a great nation that would become God's Chosen People. But the promised son was a long time in coming. Isaac was born to Abraham when he was 100 years old and Sarah 90. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard they would have a son in their old age. When Isaac was born Sarah joyfully said that God had prepared laughter for her and her friends (Genesis 21:6).

- I. What The Old Testament Says About Isaac.
  - A. We have no record of Isaac's early life apart from the record of his circumcision when he was eight days old (Genesis 21:4) and his weaning (Genesis 21:8).
  - B. The offering of Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-19)
    1. Genesis 22 records the greatest test Abraham ever faced.
      - a. Abraham obeyed God and Isaac went with his father to Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem).
      - b. Most people think Isaac was only a small boy at the time, but the first-century, Jewish historian, Josephus, says he was at least 25 years old.
    2. God had promised Abraham that from Isaac He would raise up a great nation; now He commands Abraham to offer Isaac up as a burnt offering.
      - a. How God would reconcile this, Abraham did not know, nor was it his business to know.
      - b. Abraham's business was to OBEY God and trust Him regardless. (Cp. Hebrews 11:17-19)
    3. In verse 7, Isaac asked his only question: **"My father . . . Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"**
      - a. Abraham answered in verse 8, **"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."**
        - (1) The New King James Version, and other versions, capitalizes the word **"Himself"** making it a proper noun, speaking of a Person – **"God will provide Himself the lamb."** (Cp. John 1:29)
        - (2) Notice the immediate provision for Abraham in verse 13: **"and Abraham went and took the ram [not a lamb], and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."**
      - b. Here we have the beautiful picture of a New Testament reality:
        - (1) Abraham offered his only son. (John 3:16)
        - (2) Isaac was obedient, even unto death. (Philippians 2:8)
        - (3) The ram became a substitute. (I Peter 3:18)
    4. Isaac's birth is a foreshadowing of the birth of Jesus Christ.
      - a. Both Isaac and Jesus had been promised. (Galatians 3:16)
        - (1) Abraham was promised a son 25 years earlier.

- (2) God's "**Seed**" was promised shortly after the Fall. (Genesis 3:15)
- b. The announcement of both births was unusual.
  - (1) So incredible were the announcements that Sarah and Abraham laughed.
  - (2) Mary questioned the "*mechanics*" of the virgin birth. (Luke 1:34)
- c. Both were named before their birth.
  - (1) God told Abraham to call his name "**Isaac,**" meaning "*laughter*" (Genesis 17:17, 18:11-15).
  - (2) The angel told Joseph to name Him "**JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins**" (Matthew 1:21).
- d. Both births were at God's appointed time.
  - (1) Isaac was born during Abraham's centennial. (Genesis 21:1-5)
  - (2) Jesus was born in "**the fulness of time**" (Galatians 4:4).
- e. Both births were miraculous.
  - (1) Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90.
  - (2) No man had part in the virgin birth of Jesus. (Romans 4:19-25)
- C. A bride for Isaac. (Genesis 24)
  - 1. Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 years of age.
  - 2. She became Isaac's wife when God directed one of Abraham's servants to her.
  - 3. The Bible reveals that Isaac loved Rebekah and that she was a comfort to him after his mother's (Sarah) death.
  - 4. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Jacob and Esau, who were born when Isaac was 60 years old. (Genesis 25:20-26)
- D. The good character of Isaac.
  - 1. Submissive and Faithful. (Genesis 22:6, 9)
  - 2. Given to meditation. (Genesis 24:63)
  - 3. Devoted marriage partner. (Genesis 24:67)
  - 4. Peaceful. (Genesis 26:20-22)
  - 5. Man of prayer and worship. (Genesis 26:25)
- E. Isaac dies in Genesis 35:27-29.
  - 1. Isaac stands between two stately and impressive names, Abraham and Jacob.
  - 2. The association of "**Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**" is used 105 times in the Bible.

## II. What The New Testament Says About Isaac.

- A. Isaac was a man of faith.
  - 1. He cooperated with the faith of Abraham. (Hebrews 11:17-19)
  - 2. He became an example of faith to Jacob and Esau. (Hebrews 11:20)
- B. Paul uses Isaac and his mother, Sarah, as historical examples of those who are justified by faith in God's promise. (Galatians 4:21-31)
  - 1. The Judaizers in Paul's day were trying to reconcile Sarah and Hagar with Isaac and Ishmael.
  - 2. Such reconciliation is contrary to the Word of God, because Law and Grace are mutually exclusive of one another.

**Conclusion:** What God promises, He always does, even if it takes many years (as in the case of the birth of Isaac). What God requires of us is to walk by faith. (Hebrews 11:6)

## JACOB

**Text:** Genesis 25:19-28

**Introduction:** Jacob was the second son of Isaac and Rebekah. He was the twin brother of Esau. Jacob was born only a short time after Esau and is, therefore, called the “*younger*” brother. In a prophetic revelation to Rebekah before their births, the Lord God said to her, **“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”** Why? Paul explained in Romans 9:11, **“that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”**

- I. Jacob’s Name Means “*A Supplanter,*” Meaning “*Taking The Place Of Another.*”
  - A. Jacob was born in answer to his father’s prayer. (Genesis 25:21)
    1. He became the favorite son of his mother. (Genesis 25:28)
    2. He was named “**Jacob**” because, at the birth of the twins, “**his hand took hold of Esau’s heel**” (Genesis 25:26).
  - B. According to the Genesis narrative, Jacob continued to take “**hold of**” the possessions of others.
    1. “**His hand took hold of**” his brother’s birthright. (Genesis 25:29-34)
      - a. Esau’s birthright could have meant control and head of the family, but Esau “**despised his birthright**” (25:34).
      - b. Esau lived for the present.
      - c. All of Jacob’s cheating and trickery were unnecessary, for God had already said, “**the elder shall serve the younger**” (25:23).
    2. “**His hand took hold of**” his father’s blessing. (Genesis 27:1-29)
      - a. Here we see one of the common weaknesses of the flesh: trying to help God. (Cp. Sarah’s suggestion to Abraham resulting in Ishmael.)
      - b. Jacob and Rebekah schemed together for Jacob to receive the blessing of Isaac.
      - c. Though God’s prophecy was ultimately fulfilled, how might it have come to pass had the historical conflict with Esau been different?
    3. “**His hand took hold of**” his father-in-law’s flocks. (Genesis 28:1-5)
      - a. Jacob began to reap what he had sown. (Galatians 6:7-8)
        - (1) He had deceived his brother, Esau, in stealing his birthright.
        - (2) He had deceived his father, Isaac, in stealing his blessing.
        - (3) Now he was about to be deceived by his father-in-law, Uncle Laban.
      - b. Jacob arranged with Laban to work seven years for Rachel, but ended up working fourteen instead, gaining Leah also in the process. (Genesis 29:10-30)
        - (1) Jacob ended up working twenty years for Laban, having his wages changed at least ten times. (Genesis 31:41-42)
        - (2) Jacob’s increase was the result of his own treachery. (Gen. 30:29-43)

- II. Jacob Experienced Two Dramatic Moments In His Life.
- A. At Bethel. (Genesis 28:10-22)
1. The experience at Bethel occurred when he left his family home at Beersheba to travel to Haran, the residence of his mother's brother, Uncle Laban.
    - a. As he stopped for a night, he had a dream of a staircase reaching from earth to heaven with angels upon it and the Lord above it.
    - b. It was here that the Lord confirmed to him the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. (28:13-15)
  2. Jacob dedicated the site as a place of worship, calling it "**Bethel**," meaning "*the house of God.*" (28:18-19)
    - a. In view of God's grace and blessing, Jacob promised to give a tithe of all that he would receive. (28:22)
    - b. What Abraham had introduced (Genesis 14:20), Jacob practiced.
  3. More than 20 years later, Jacob would return to this spot, build an altar, and call the place "**Elbethel**," literally meaning "*God of the house of God.*" (Gen. 35:1-7)
    - a. Having fled in distress from his brother, Esau, and from his father-in-law, Laban, it was time for Jacob to come clean before God.
    - b. More important than God's house is God Himself.
- B. At the River Jabbok. (Genesis 32:22-32)
1. The experience at the River Jabbok occurred as Jacob returned from his long stay at Haran.
    - a. One night Jacob found himself suddenly engaged in a wrestling match.
    - b. This match lasted until the breaking of the dawn.
  2. During the struggle, the socket of Jacob's hip was put out of joint by this mysterious stranger, but he refused to release his grip until he was given a blessing.
    - a. Many Bible teachers believe this to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.
    - b. For the first time, Jacob had been unable to defeat an opponent.
    - c. Fighting against God he lost; but having met with God changed his life.
  3. Jacob's struggle earned him a new name – "**Israel**," literally "*Prince with God.*"
    - a. In return, Jacob gave a name to the spot that marked the change.
    - b. The place would be named "**Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved**" (32:30).
- C. Resulting from these two experiences Jacob turned from his "*grasping*" to submission.
- III. Lessons From Jacob.
- A. It never pays to be a cheater – for Jacob paid over and over for his scheming.
  - B. We should never try to help God by rushing ahead of His will for us.
  - C. We should always remember the unchanging law of sowing and reaping.
  - D. God never breaks a promise.
  - E. Sometimes it does us good to go back to "**Bethel**."

**Conclusion:** As Christians, we are always called upon to be people of "*character.*"

## JOSEPH

**Text:** Genesis 30:22-24a

**Introduction:** From Genesis 37, through the remainder of Genesis, the central figure becomes Joseph although the narrative is still dealing with the family line of Jacob. Though the first son of Rachel, Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob who became his father's favorite because **"he was the son of his old age"** (Genesis 37:3).

More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to any other character in Genesis. There are at least two reasons for his prominence. First, Joseph becomes an good example for our admonition. I Corinthians 10:11 reminds us, **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition . . ."**

Second, there is no other person in all of Scripture who is more like Jesus Christ in his person and experiences than Joseph. This likeness is not accidental but pictorial.

- I. The Humiliation Of Joseph. (Genesis 37:1-11)
  - A. Joseph and his family were shepherds in the land of Canaan.
    1. He was loved by his father, Jacob (Israel).
    2. He was hated by his brothers because he was their father's favorite.
      - a. They were jealous of him.
      - b. By making a coat of many colors for him, Jacob provided for him a mark of distinction, honor and separation.
    3. Three times we read of the hatred of his brothers toward Joseph. (37:4, 5, 11)
  - B. Joseph was a dreamer.
    1. From his dreams Joseph saw the future when his brothers would bow down to him.
    2. This was another reason for their hatred toward him.
  - C. Joseph was betrayed. (Genesis 37:12-35)
    1. One day Jacob sent Joseph to look after the welfare of his brothers.
    2. When his brothers saw him coming, they plotted against him.
    3. Though Reuben wanted to save him, Judah suggested that he be sold to some Ishmaelites/Midianites (second cousins) for **"twenty pieces of silver."**
    4. In taking Joseph's coat and sprinkling it with blood, they led their father to believe that his beloved son was dead.
- II. The Testing Of Joseph.
  - A. Joseph would eventually end up in Egypt. (Genesis 37:36)
    1. He became a servant in Potiphar's house. (Genesis 39:1-6)
    2. In delight to his master, he became prosperous in all that he did.
    3. He exemplified a *"second man"* status, by seeking to make his *"boss"* a success.
  - B. Joseph was greatly tempted.
    1. He was tempted morally. (Genesis 39:7-10)
    2. He was falsely accused. (Genesis 39:11-20)

- C. Joseph would endure two full years of imprisonment. (Genesis 41:1)
  - 1. While in prison, he would be a blessing to many and interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. (Genesis 40:1-23)
  - 2. Though tempted, falsely accused and imprisoned, Joseph did not let his circumstances temper his service. (Genesis 39:21-23)
  - 3. The secret to Joseph's integrity was his "*fear of the Lord.*" (Genesis 39:9)
  
- III. The Exaltation Of Joseph. (Genesis 41:14-16)
  - A. When Pharaoh had a dream, Joseph was used by God to interpret it.
    - 1. In interpreting the dream, Joseph magnified God, not himself.
    - 2. He interpreted the dream, both good and bad. (Cite Genesis 41:17-32)
    - 3. He gave explicit instructions to Pharaoh as to what to do. (Genesis 41:33-36)
  - B. Pharaoh promoted Joseph to the task. (Cite Genesis 41:37-45)
    - 1. Notice the phrase used in verse 38, "**Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?**"
    - 2. All that which Joseph predicted came to pass. (Genesis 41:46ff)
  
- IV. The Disclosure Of Joseph.
  - A. Back in Canaan, Joseph's family was also facing the consequences of the same famine.
    - 1. Jacob sent his other sons to Egypt to find food.
    - 2. After a series of events, Joseph disclosed himself to his brothers and he was reunited with his father.
  - B. In all that he experienced, Joseph saw the hand of the Lord on his life. (Genesis 50:20)
    - 1. Through all that he had experienced, God had prepared him for the task at hand. (I Peter 5:6)
    - 2. When faced with the injustices of life, we might do well to ask ourselves, "*What does God have in mind with this circumstance?*"
  
- V. The Parallels Of Joseph To Jesus.
  - A. He was the well-beloved son of his father. (Genesis 37:3, Matthew 3:17)
  - B. He revealed the exalted position he would hold in the future and was hated for it. (Genesis 37:5-8, Matthew 26:62-66)
  - C. Though sent by his father, he was willing to go. (Genesis 37:13, Philippians 2:5-7)
  - D. He lived in a place of fellowship with his father before being sent to his brethren. (Genesis 37:14, John 17:5)
  - E. He was tempted yet did not yield. (Genesis 39, Hebrews 4:15, cp. Matthew 4:1-11)
  - F. While in judgment, one malefactor died and the other lived. (Genesis 40:20-22, Luke 23:39-43)
  - G. He was raised from the place of death by the King. (Genesis 41:14, Ephesians 1:19-20)
  - H. After his exaltation, he was given a Gentile bride. (Genesis 41:45, Revelation 21:2)
  - I. He was the acknowledged savior of his people. (Genesis 47:25, Philippians 2:9-11)

**Conclusion:** In his sermon, found in Acts 7:9-19, Stephen retells the story of Joseph and Israel in Egypt, confirming all that God had said would come to pass. In his life, Joseph becomes our example in the difficult times of our lives. We can take comfort in knowing that whatever evil befalls us, "**God [has] meant it unto good**" (Genesis 50:20, cp. Romans 8:28).

## JUDAH

**Text:** Genesis 29:35

**Introduction:** Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, being born of Leah. His mother named him Judah, meaning “*praise*” (Genesis 49:8), because of her gratitude to God for him. Later in Scripture we find another distinguished mother (Mary) giving praise to the Lord for a greater Son who came from the Tribe of Judah (Luke 1:46-47).

Because of the sins of Reuben, Simeon and Levi, they were passed over and Judah became the founder of the tribal family out of which the messianic line flowed. Revelation 5:5 speaks of Jesus Christ as “**the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.**”

Judah became the leader among his brothers. As spokesman before his undisclosed brother, Joseph, in Egypt, he gave one of the most passionate speeches recorded in the Bible (Genesis 44:18-34). As a result of Judah’s speech, Joseph revealed himself as his brethren’s brother. Joseph’s revelation of himself to his brothers is a reminder that God often works in mysterious ways (Genesis 50:19-20), and so it can also be said concerning God’s purposes for Judah’s life and calling.

- I. Judah’s Birth. (Genesis 29:31-35)
  - A. Judah was born into a mixed-up household.
    1. Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29:16-17), and each of them had a personal handmaid, Zilpah and Bilhah (Genesis 29:24, 29).
      - a. Leah, the older of the two sisters, is described as “**tender eyed**” (Genesis 29:17), but also “**hated**” by Jacob (Genesis 29:31).
      - b. Rachel, the younger of the two sisters, whom Jacob “**loved**” (Genesis 29:18, 20), is described as “**beautiful and well favored.**”
    2. Jacob would eventually have twelve brothers from four different women.
      - a. Leah bore Jacob six sons in all.
      - b. Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah each bore him two sons.
    3. Judah would be the fourth son born to Leah.
  - B. Lesson: never show favoritism in a mixed family. (cp. Joseph, Genesis 37:3)
- II. Judah’s Sinfulness. (Genesis 38:11-30)
  - A. Even though some would think of the great men of the Bible as some sort of “*super-saints*,” the authenticity of the Bible’s inspiration is attested to by the fact that it records the bleaker sides of said “*saints*.”
    1. Judah married a Canaanite woman. (Genesis 38:1-2, cp. Genesis 28:1-3)
    2. By Shuah, Judah had three sons.
      - a. Er died because of his wickedness. (Genesis 38:7)
      - b. By custom Onan was to marry Er’s wife, Tamar, to raise up offspring unto his brother, but he acted irresponsibly. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)
      - c. In view of the situation, Judah refused to give his third son, Shelah, to Tamar.

- B. In response to his disregard, Tamar deceived Judah into an act of adultery.
  - 1. Tamar, playing the role of a harlot, seduced Judah into a trap to provide offspring unto her dead husband.
  - 2. When the trap was revealed, Judah's lack of integrity and hypocrisy were exposed. (Genesis 38:24-26)
  - 3. Jacob's family had again experienced the fruit of deception. (Galatians 6:7, "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**")
- C. Lessons from Judah's sin.
  - 1. The story of the patriarchs reminds us of the grace of God and His sovereignty.
  - 2. The men and women who played a part in this important drama weren't perfect, and some of them were deliberately disobedient; and yet the Lord used them to accomplish His intentions.
  - 3. This doesn't mean that God approved of their sin, but it does mean that God can take the weak things of this world and accomplish His purposes. (I Cor. 1:26-31).

### III. Judah's Lineage.

- A. Through his son, Pharez (Genesis 38:29), Judah became an ancestor of David (Ruth 4:18-22) and of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:3-16).
- B. The blessing of dying Jacob on Judah is understood to be Messianic. (Genesis 49:8-12)
  - 1. Judah received the "**praise**" of his brethren.
    - a. He had made some mistakes, but he had also made some things right with his father and his family.
    - b. Often as the leader of the "*tribes of Israel*," Judah's tribe, as such, received "**praise**" of them.
  - 2. Judah was "**a lion's whelp [cub].**"
    - a. As a lion's cub, Judah would be strong, but the "**Lion**" would be stronger.
    - b. Revelation 5:5 describes Jesus Christ as "**the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David.**"
  - 3. His "**sceptre**" was a symbol of authority.
    - a. His was the conquering tribe and the ruling tribe that stayed faithful to the Davidic line even when the nation divided under Rehoboam.
    - b. He was the head of the "*royal line*" that gave Israel their kings and that ultimately brought Jesus Christ into the world. (Hebrews 7:14)
  - 4. The ancient rabbinical scholars took "**Shiloh**" to be the name of the promised Messiah who alone has the right to claim rule over God's people.
    - a. The reference to the "**foal**" and the "**colt**" were fulfilled when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, offering Himself as the Messiah and King of Israel.
    - b. That He "**washed his garments in wine, and . . . in the blood of grapes**" clearly speaks of His own blood that He shed to save the world.

**Conclusion:** Judah was a sinful man, yet God used him. Many want to look back to some dysfunction in their background to excuse their behavior. In reality, we are all sinners, carnal, yet the Lord can use us when we respond with humility and repentance. We may not give rise to a king, but we can still fulfill God's design for our lives by yielding to Him.

## MOSES

**Text:** Exodus 2:1-10

**Introduction:** Moses was the Hebrew prophet used by God to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and who then became their leader during their years of wandering in the wilderness. He was so inspired by God that he was able to build a united nation from a race of oppressed and weary slaves. Moses' life is divided into three major periods.

### I. Forty Years In The Egyptian Palace.

- A. Moses was born when Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, had given orders that no male Hebrew child born should be allowed to live. (Exodus 1:7-22)
  - 1. The Hebrews had been reproducing so fast that Pharaoh felt threatened by a potential revolt against his authority.
  - 2. To save the infant Moses, his mother made a vessel of papyrus, placed him in it, and floated it among the reeds on the bank of the Nile River.
- B. By the providence of God, Moses was found and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter.
  - 1. At the same time, the Lord determined that Moses should be taught in his earliest years by his own mother.
  - 2. He was reared in the royal court as a prince of Egypt. (Acts 7:22)
  - 3. Raised in a princely fashion, Moses became instructed "**in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,**" who were then the most influential people in all the world.
  - 4. Being in the palace of Pharaoh for the first forty years of his life equipped Moses for what God had in mind.
- C. At the age of 40, having become angry with an Egyptian taskmaster for beating a Hebrew slave, Moses killed him and buried him in the sand. (Exodus 2:11-12)
  - 1. When word got out, he feared for his own life and fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. (Exodus 2:13-15, cp. Acts 7:23-29)
  - 2. Hebrews 11:24-25 speaks of this time in Moses' life: "**By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.**"

### II. Forty Years In The Land Of Midian.

- A. Moses' next 40 year was spent in the land of Midian (mostly in northwest Arabia), in the desert between Egypt and Canaan.
  - 1. In Midian Moses became a shepherd and eventually the son-in-law of Jethro, a Midianite priest.
  - 2. Jethro gave his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses in marriage (Exodus 2:16-21), and she bore him two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:3-4).
- B. Near the end of his 40 year sojourn in Midian, Moses experienced a dramatic call to, and commissioning for, ministry. (Exodus 3:1-10)
  - 1. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and the bush was not consumed.

2. Moses tried to excuse himself from his call and commissioning.
  - a. **“Who am I.”** (Exodus 3:11, cp. 3:12)
  - b. **“What shall I say.”** (Exodus 3:13, cp. 3:14)
  - c. **“They will not believe.”** (Exodus 4:1, cp. 4:2-9)
  - d. **“I am not eloquent.”** (Exodus 4:10, cp. 4:11-12)
  - e. *“Send someone else.”* (Exodus 4:13, cp. 4:14-16)
3. Unknown – *“God’s callings are God’s enablings.”* (Cp. Romans 11:29)
- C. After his call, Moses returned to Egypt to confront Pharaoh with the Lord’s demand – **“Let my people go . . .”** (Exodus 5:1).
  1. Moses followed up with a series of 10 plagues, each designed as a direct attack on one of Egypt’s many gods.
  2. The plagues further served some other purposes:
    - a. They revealed the LORD to an unbelieving world. (Exodus 7:5)
    - b. They brought honor to God’s people. (Exodus 8:22-23)
    - c. They revealed the power and holiness of God. (Exodus 9:16)
    - d. They give testimony to future generations. (Exodus 10:1-2)
    - e. They brought judgment on the false gods. (Exodus 12:12)
  3. The final plague, resulted in the Passover, symbolized the day when God’s own Lamb would come into the world to deliver, by His own blood, all those who put their trust alone in Him, setting them free from sin and death. (I Peter 1:18-19)
  4. Finally, Pharaoh tells Moses to go. (Exodus 12:29-31)
- D. After the Hebrews departure, Pharaoh’s forces pursued them to the Red Sea, threatening to destroy them before they could cross. (Exodus 14:5-9)
  1. When Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, the waters divided and the Israelites passed to the other side. (Exodus 14:21-22)
  2. When the Egyptians attempted to follow, Moses again stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters closed over the Egyptian army. (Exodus 14:23-28)
  3. This section closes with what has been called *“The Song of Moses”*: **“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel . . .”** (Exodus 15:1, cp. verses 11 and 26)

### III. Forty Years Wandering In The Wilderness.

- A. Because of disobedience, Israel would be left to wander in the Wilderness for 40 years. (Numbers 13:25-33)
  1. During their wanderings, Moses’ patience was continually tested by the murmurings, grumblings, and complaints of the people.
  2. At one point, Moses’ patience reached its breaking point resulting in him not being able to enter the Promised Land. (Numbers 20:7-12, cp. Exodus 17:1-7)
- B. During their wanderings in the Wilderness, Moses received the Law, including the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-24), as well as instructions regarding worship and the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-40).

**Conclusion:** The Book of Hebrews speaks in glowing terms of the faith of Moses (Hebrews 11:24-29). He was highly esteemed by various writers of the Bible. The New Testament, however, shows that Moses’ teaching was intended only to prepare the way for the greater teaching and work of Jesus Christ. What Moses promised, Jesus fulfilled: **“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”** (John 1:17).

## AARON

**Text:** Exodus 4:27-30

**Introduction:** Aaron, whose name means “*mountain of strength*,” was the older brother of Moses and the first high priest of the Hebrew nation. Being three years older than his brother, he was a fourth generation descendant of Levi, born unto Amram and Jochebed (Exodus 6:20). It is assumed that he was born before the terrible edict of Pharaoh dooming the Hebrew male children to death (Exodus 1:15-16). He eventually married Elisheba (of the tribe of Judah) and she bore him four sons – Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Exodus 6:23).

- I. Aaron’s Calling. (Exodus 3:1-11, 4:10-16)
  - A. When God called Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, Moses protested that he would not be able to speak convincingly to Pharaoh.
    1. The Lord then designated his brother, Aaron, to be His spokesman.
    2. Exodus 4:16 says, “**And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people . . . and thou shalt be to him instead of God.**”
  - B. Exodus 7:1 speaks of Aaron as Moses’ “**prophet.**”
    1. The word “**prophet**” comes from two words.
      - a. “*PRO*,” meaning, “*in the place of.*”
      - b. “*PHEMI*,” meaning, “*to speak.*”
    2. When the Lord God said that Aaron was to be Moses’ “**prophet,**” He was meaning that Aaron would be the one who speaks in the place of Moses.
  - C. When Moses and Aaron finally returned to Egypt from Midian, they gathered the elders of Israel together and Aaron told them of the approaching deliverance from bondage. (Exodus 4:29-31).
- II. Aaron’s Priesthood. (Exodus 28:1-3)
  - A. When the priesthood was instituted in the Wilderness, Moses consecrated Aaron as the first High Priest.
    1. The priesthood was set within the tribe of Levi, from which Aaron was descended.
    2. Aaron was given special robes to wear, signifying his status within the priesthood.
      - a. The purpose of his clothing was to stir dignity and honor for God’s call and for the Priestly office.
      - b. The charge was to make holy garments for a man who would personally minister before a holy God. (I Peter 2:9)
  - B. The Tabernacle, the main sanctuary of worship, was placed under Aaron’s supervision. (Numbers 4)
    1. He alone, serving in the capacity of the High Priest, went into the Holy of Holies once a year to represent the people on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 23:27)
    2. The Day of Atonement was a recognition of humanity’s inability to make any atonement for their own sins. (Hebrews 10:1-12)

- C. Aaron's priesthood became a precursor to Christ's priesthood. (Hebrews 9:11-15)
  - 1. We need no proof that the eternal blood of Jesus Christ is far superior to that of Aaron's annual animal sacrifices.
  - 2. The cleansing of the conscience cannot be done by some external ceremony; but Jesus, **"through the eternal Spirit"** is able to clear our **"conscience from dead works to serve the living God."**
  - 3. The blessings under the old priesthood depended on obedience, but we can have confidence because all that we have in Christ is eternal.

### III. Aaron's Failure. (Exodus 32:1-10)

- A. In spite of his responsibility for the spiritual leadership of the nation, Aaron committed a serious sin in the Wilderness surrounding Mount Sinai.
  - 1. While Moses was on the mountain praying to God and receiving His commandments, the people began to build a golden calf to worship.
  - 2. Aaron made no attempt to stop the people and even issued instructions on how to build the image.
  - 3. Aaron was eventually saved from God's wrath only because of the intercession of Moses. (Deuteronomy 9:20)
- B. Some causes of terrible sins. (Exodus 32:1)
  - 1. Impatience. (James 1:3-4)
    - a. Moses had been gone for forty days (nearly six weeks), praying and receiving the Law of God by the finger of God.
    - b. Israel's speculation, questioning, restlessness, and impatience led to the terrible sin they were about to commit.
  - 2. Peer-pressure. (Matthew 10:28)
    - a. Aaron had been left in charge of the people while Moses was away.
    - b. In his weakness, Aaron failed to have the backbone to stand up to the crowd.
  - 3. Unbelief. (Hebrews 3:12)
    - a. The people requested Aaron to make them an image of some god who could guide them to the Promised Land.
    - b. They were a people given to believe in many gods just as many today believe in whatever god pleases them and offers some form of hope.
  - 4. Disobedience. (John 14:15)
    - a. Believing in false gods and worshiping idols are violations of the first two commandments of God. (Exodus 20:2-5a)
    - b. To do these things is a direct violation of the one true and living God.
  - 5. Self-sufficiency. (I Peter 1:13-14)
    - a. How quickly Israel had forgotten the deliverance and salvation of the Lord.
    - b. How typical of the humanistic philosophy of every generation that deliverance and salvation rests in the hands of man himself.

**Conclusion:** Aaron was called of God, appointed for service, and yet he drowned in failure. As Moses' spokesman he had been involved in many great things and faced sizeable challenges, yet they were both refused entry into the Promised Land because of rebellion. (Numbers 20:22-24) Having been called of God, and appointed for service, let us not drown in failure and rebellion. Let us cooperate with the Lord in His designs for our lives.

## JOSHUA

**Text:** Joshua 1:1-2

**Introduction:** Joshua, whose name means “*Jehovah is salvation*,” became the successor to Moses and the man who led the nation of Israel to conquer the land of Canaan and settle the Promised Land. All that we know about him is that he was born as a slave in Egypt. His father was an Ephraimite named “**Nun**” (Numbers 13:8). Nothing is mentioned in Scripture of his mother, but, without a doubt, Joshua’s parents feared the Lord God of Israel.

- I. Joshua, Moses’ Minister. (Exodus 24:12-13)
  - A. Joshua had the unique privilege to go with Moses to Mt. Sinai. (Cp. Exodus 32:15-17)
    1. He actually became Moses’ assistant.
    2. He felt it his responsibility to care for Moses’ reputation, character, and physical needs.
    3. Later, he stayed in the Tabernacle to intercept any further instructions from the Lord for Moses. (Exodus 33:11)
  - B. It is hard to play “*second fiddle*,” but it was in this capacity that Joshua had great ability.
    1. He was second to Moses and a servant to Moses, but Joshua was first and foremost “**the servant of the Lord**” (Joshua 24:29).
    2. It has been said, “*To be a great leader you must first be a good follower!*”
    3. A “*second fiddle*,” or a second man, called of God, can perform a service of great distinction if that person can kill self-pride.
    4. Joshua was such a man, and God was able to use him mightily.
  - C. In God’s perfect timing, Joshua became the successor to Moses. (Numbers 27:15-23)
- II. Joshua, Man Of Faith. (Numbers 13:1-3, 8, 25-33)
  - A. God sending out twelve spies to “**search the land of Canaan**” is the climax to the history of the “*first generation*” of Israelites.
    1. This rebellion was the tenth rebellion of unbelief and grumbling within two years.
    2. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary has the following to say: “*The malicious report of the ten spies . . . spread throughout the populace like a vicious virus on rampage. The words of Caleb and Joshua were not heard. Everywhere people heard of walled cities, strong men, giants, and the fabled Nephilim. The giant clusters of grapes were a portent of doom. If clusters of grapes were as great as these, imagine what the people would be like! No one talked about God’s grace. None recited his miracles. Forgotten was the act of God where the most powerful nation of their world was stymied at the rushing of waters back to their beds. The thunder of Sinai, the fire of God, that he had spoken and delivered and graced his people beyond imagination – all these things were forgotten in their . . . fear. Fear unchecked becomes its own fuel, a self-propelling force that expands as it expends.*”

- B. The response of Joshua and Caleb was different. (Numbers 14:6-9)
  - 1. These two men tore their clothes in a symbol of ritual mourning.
  - 2. They declared the truthful facts about the land that they had spied out.
  - 3. By sheer faith in God's Word, and believing the promises of God, they were ready to take on the giants and enter the Promised Land.  
(Ephesians 6:10, **"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."**)

### III. Joshua, Called Of God. (Joshua 1:1-9)

- A. Joshua became God's choice for leadership after the death of Moses.
  - 1. He was to lead the *"second generation"* of the children of Israel into the land that God had given to Abraham. (Genesis 12:7a)
  - 2. Though Moses lead Israel up to Canaan, Joshua lead them into Canaan.
- B. The Lord's claim on Joshua.
  - 1. The Lord's calling of Joshua. (1:1-2)
  - 2. The Lord's promise to Joshua. (1:3-4)
  - 3. The Lord's assurance to Joshua. (1:5)
  - 4. The Lord's commissioning of Joshua. (1:6-9)

### IV. Joshua, Leader In War. (Joshua 2-12)

- A. A critical moment for Israel was the crossing of the Jordan River. (3:1)
  - 1. Joshua was ready. (3:5)
    - a. The Lord had assured him. (3:7)
    - b. Joshua assured the Lord's people. (3:9-10)
  - 2. After the crossing, the Lord told Joshua to raise two memorials. (4:9, 19-20)
    - a. These memorials would remind Israel of the power of God in holding back the waters, and of God's faithfulness in bringing them into the land.
    - b. These memorials remind us of our Lord's faithfulness to deliver us from our sin and assure us of our arrival in a *"Promised Land."*
- B. The first thing Joshua faced after crossing the Jordan was Jericho. (5:13-15)
  - 1. At that precise moment, God revealed Himself to Joshua.
  - 2. The same words God used when He called Moses, were used with Joshua.
  - 3. With this encouragement, Joshua was assured that Jericho would fall if Israel would do as the Lord commanded.

### V. Joshua, Diplomat In Peace. (Joshua 13-24)

- A. Joshua used diplomacy in dividing the land among the tribes.
- B. In Joshua's farewell message, he exhorted the people.
  - 1. To abide by the word of God. (23:6)
  - 2. To keep separated from the world. (23:7)
  - 3. To cleave unto the Lord. (23:11)
  - 4. To guard against apostasy. (23:13)
- C. In Joshua's final last words, he challenged the people to serve the Lord. (24:14-15)

**Conclusion:** Joshua is a good example of a young man who devoted himself to faithful service in the Lord, and was found faithful unto the end.

## RAHAB

**Text:** Joshua 2

**Introduction:** Rahab was an Amorite, who were an idolatrous people. Her parents, brothers, and sisters were all alive at the time of the conquest of Jericho. Not much information is given regarding her family by name, but she mentions their relationship in Joshua 2:13.

Rahab was known as a “**harlot.**” Her house was built on the city wall of Jericho with her window overlooking the outside wall. Some interpreters have suggested that the word “**harlot**” can be translated “*innkeeper,*” but such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the usage of the word throughout the rest of the Old Testament. Perhaps she was both an innkeeper and a harlot, answering the question as to why spies would end up at her home. Yet, the Bible never makes an attempt to call her by any other title except “**harlot.**”

- I. Rahab’s Decision. (2:1-7)
  - A. The Scripture immediately opens with the suspense of two spies being sent forth by Joshua for a reconnaissance mission.
    1. By conquering Jericho, Israel would be able to strike across the center of the country and split the northern and southern armies of the Canaanites.
    2. The spies actually entered Jericho and made their way to the house of Rahab.
  - B. What Rahab does is a clear picture of her turning from her former life (repentance) and turning to the Lord (faith) by identifying with the people of God. (Cp. I Thess. 1:9)
    1. She hid the spies.
      - a. She stated that they had left the city before nightfall.
      - b. She suggested that the spies might still be caught if pursued quickly.
    2. Though Rahab’s lie is recorded, nowhere do we read that the Bible approved of it.
    3. In her actions, Rahab made the courageous decision to turn away from the evil and corruption of the Canaanites to God.  
(Acts 17:30, “**And the times of this ignorance God winked at** [or, “*allowed to pass unnoticed*”]; **but now commandeth all men every where to repent.**”)
- II. Rahab’s Faith. (2:8-11)
  - A. Rahab opened her heart to the two spies and revealed her strong conviction about God.
    1. She believed that the Lord was the living and true God.
    2. She believed that the Lord had delivered Israel out of Egypt.
    3. She believed that the Lord had given Israel victory over the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og.
    4. She shared with the spies that a “*defeated spirit*” had gripped the Canaanites.
  - B. Rahab made a strong confession to the spies.
    1. The Lord was the only true and living God, who ruled both heaven and earth.
    2. The Lord was a personal God who guided and cared for His followers.
    3. The Lord would fulfill His promises to His people.
  - C. Rahab believed the testimony about God.

1. To be saved, we must believe the Scriptures about God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. (John 5:39, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”**)
2. Faith is an absolute essential for salvation. (Hebrews 11:6, **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”**)

### III. Rahab’s Appeal. (2:12-16)

- A. Rahab’s desperate request flowed from her heart.
  1. She asked for safety, not only for herself, but also for her family.
  2. She was given the assurance by the spies of being rescued and saved.
  3. She put her faith into action by helping the spies escape and even advised them where to find refuge in the mountains.
- B. The Lord, and the Lord alone, can save us from certain, eternal death.
  1. To call upon the Lord for salvation is to receive eternal life. (II Peter 3:9, **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”**)
  2. Salvation is in Him, and Him alone. (Acts 4:12, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”**)

### IV. Rahab’s Token. (2:17-21)

- A. The **“scarlet thread [rope]”** would identify her house as a *“house of safety,”* so also does the blood of Jesus Christ represent our *“house of safety.”* (I Peter 1:18-19, **“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**)
- B. That which is good for us is also good for our family and others. (Acts 16:30-31, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”**)
- C. Salvation is wrought to all who would enter the *“house of safety”* by faith alone.
- D. A one sure sign of true faith is continuance *“in the faith.”* (I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”**)

### V. Rahab’s Reward.

- A. She became an ancestress of Jesus. (Matthew 1:5)
- B. She is commended in the *“Hall of Faith.”* (Hebrews 11:31)

**Conclusion:** Rahab teaches us it is not the amount of truth that one has that saves, but it is in responding to the truth that one has that saves.

## GIDEON

**Text:** Judges 6:11-12

**Introduction:** Gideon was the son of Joash, an Abiezrite, who lived in Ophrah. When he is first mentioned in the Bible he is a mature man. He had already become a noted warrior (Judges 6:12), perhaps by waging “*underground*” warfare against the marauding Midianites. The extent to which the people had been enslaved is shown by the fact that Gideon is introduced hiding in a “**winepress**” to do the threshing. That the messenger who called Gideon to lead Israel was from God was attested to by a supernatural fire which consumed a sacrifice which he had placed upon a rock (Judges 6:17-23).

- I. Gideon’s (Israel’s) Situation. (6:1-10)
  - A. Because of their “**evil**,” God chastened Israel. (6:1-6)
    1. Chastening is evidence of God’s hatred for sin and His love for His people. (Hebrews 12:6, “**For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.**”)
    2. Charles Spurgeon – “*The Lord does not permit His children to sin successfully.*”
  - B. Because of their “*cry*,” God rebuked Israel. (6:7-10)
    1. Often when the Lord denounced His people for their disobedience, He reminded them of the wonderful way He had delivered them from Egypt.
    2. The motive for Christian living is not that we might gain something we don’t have, but that we might live up to what we already have in Christ. (Ephesians 4:1, “**I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called**”)
- II. Gideon’s Calling. (6:11-24)
  - A. At the time of Gideon’s calling, we might pause to wonder why God selected him. (6:11-12)
    1. Consider:
      - a. His family worshiped the false god of Baal.
      - b. He wasn’t a man of strong faith or courage.
      - c. Yet, I Corinthians 1:27 reminds us that “**God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.**”
    2. The fact that Gideon was threshing indoors indicates the scarcity of wheat and his fear of the enemy.
      - a. Gideon was simply doing the best he could under the circumstances.
      - b. Usually, when God looks for a man to do His work, He finds one who is busy, working with what’s available.
    3. God saw potential in Gideon.
      - a. God saw Gideon as a “**mighty man of valour.**”
      - b. Gideon saw himself as “**the least in [his] father’s house**” (6:15).

4. Only when we realize our weaknesses are we ready to move into God's almightiness.  
(II Corinthians 12:10b, ". . . **for when I am weak, then am I strong.**")
  - a. God is good at taking "*nobodies*" and making them into "*somebodies*."
  - b. God sees real potential in you!  
(Philippians 1:6, "**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**")

B. Gideon's responses. (6:13-24)

1. His first response was to question God's concern for the oppressed. (6:13-14)
2. His second response was to make excuses. (6:15-16)
3. His third response was to request a sign. (6:17-23)
4. His fourth response, finally, was to worship – the tell-tail sign of submission to God's calling. (6:24)  
(John 15:16, "**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit . . .**")

III. Gideon's Preliminary Assignment. (6:25-32)

- A. The man who was to throw off the yoke of Midian, and bring his family back to a true faith in the Lord, must first set things right in his own house.
  1. Gideon had to take his stand in his own village before he dared to face the enemy on the battlefield.
  2. If we don't practice our faith at home, how can we practice it anywhere else?
  3. Have you ever noticed that "*The Great Commission*" begins in Jerusalem?  
(Acts 1:8)
- B. Before God gives His servants great victories in public, He sometimes prepares them by giving them small victories at home.
  1. Before David killed Goliath, he learned to trust God by killing a lion and a bear.
  2. When we prove ourselves to be faithful in little things, God knows He can trust us with greater things. (Matthew 25:21)

IV. Gideon's Victory. (6:33-7:23)

- A. A call to arms. (6:33-35)
- B. A wavering faith. (6:36-40)
- C. A reduction of forces. (7:1-8)
- D. An encouraging dream. (7:9-15)
- E. A miraculous triumph. (7:16-23)

**Conclusion:** Throughout the life and exploits of Gideon, God reveals much about Himself and those He chooses for divine service. Gideon shows that God calls leaders from unlikely situations. He was a poor farmer's son who worked with his hands, and his father was an idol worshiper. Still, he became an effective leader in fulfilling God's purposes.

Gideon also teaches us that God prefers a few dedicated and disciplined disciples to throngs of uncommitted workers. It has been said, "*God can win victories with a fully committed minority.*"

## SAMSON

**Text:** Judges 13:1-5

**Introduction:** Four chapters in the Book of Judges are devoted to the life of Samson. In Judges 13-14, we're introduced to Samson, and his parents, and we see the light flickering as Samson plays with sin. Then, in Judges 15-16, the light goes out and Samson dies a martyr under the ruins of a heathen temple, a sad ending to such a promising life.

- I. A Promising Life. (Judges 13)
  - A. Though oppressed by the Philistines, God promised to send a very special deliverer. (13:6-7)
    1. This promise given to the wife of Manoah is similar to the promises given at the birth of Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ Himself.
    2. This is a clear picture of a person being set apart and dedicated to God in a very special way.
    3. God had told the prophet Jeremiah, **“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”** (Jeremiah 1:5).
  - B. Samson was to be **“a Nazarite to God.”**
    1. The word **“Nazarite”** means *“to be set apart, dedicated, or consecrated.”*
      - a. Any person, man or woman, could make a Nazarite vow, for it was voluntary and usually temporary.
      - b. Through such a vow a Nazarite would be drawn closer to the Lord in purpose and practice.
    2. A Nazarite vow involved three commitments to the Lord that would control one's diet, appearance, and associations. (Numbers 6:3-6)
      - a. He was to abstain from all intoxicating drink and unclean food.
      - b. He was to never cut his hair.
      - c. He was to never go near a dead body.
    3. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (II Corinthians 7:1).
  - C. The birth of Samson is a picture of God meeting the needs of His people. (13:24-25)
- II. A Worldly Compromise. (Judges 14)
  - A. Samson compromised by marrying an unbeliever. (14:1-2)
    1. In this first tragic episode, he was captivated by the beauty of a Philistine woman.
    2. By becoming infatuated with her he returned home and demanded his parents arrange for their marriage.
    3. Samson was living by sight and not by faith; driven by **“the lust of the eyes,”** and not by a love for the Lord.
    4. He violated the Lord's clear commands in Exodus 34:12-16. (Cp. II Corinthians 6:14-18)

- B. Samson compromised by disrespecting his parents. (14:3)
  - 1. Samson's parents could not understand why their son would violate the great trust God had put in him.
  - 2. His demand cut their hearts, causing pain and disappointment.
  - 3. He broke the clear commandment to honor his father and mother. (Exodus 20:12)
- C. Samson compromised his commitment to the Lord. (14:5-9)
  - 1. Traveling to **“the vineyards of Timnah”** would have exposed him to the *“fruit of the vine.”*
  - 2. That he ate honey from the dead lion put him in contact with a carcass.
  - 3. Obviously, his vow and commitment to God meant very little to Samson.
- D. Samson compromised his self-control. (14:11-19)
  - 1. A day never passes that some temptation does not arouse us to lose control. (I Corinthians 10:13)
  - 2. Self-control is an absolute essential. (Romans 6:13)
  - 3. In response to those who would question the phrase, **“And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him,”** Romans 8:28 reminds us that **“... ALL things work together for good ...”**

### III. A Bitter Vengeance. (Judges 15)

- A. Samson sought revenge for the loss of his wife. (15:1-5)
- B. Samson, being supernaturally empowered by God, retaliated against the evil Philistines. (15:9-15)
- C. Revenge and retaliation are often the responses that first cross our minds when someone does us wrong, but we are not to seek personal revenge. (Romans 12:19-20)

### IV. A Ruined Hero. (Judges 16)

- A. Samson's sin with a prostitute: yielding to temptation. (16:1-3)
  - 1. Thus far, all of Samson's feats of strength have been personal.
  - 2. More than any other judge of Israel, he had been born with great hope of being a mighty deliverer, but he used God's resources for his personal, lustful, benefits.
- B. Samson's sin with Delilah: destroying oneself.
  - 1. Delilah asked Samson the secret of his strength. (16:4-9)
  - 2. Delilah accused Samson of lying to her. (16:10-12)
  - 3. Delilah complained of Samson mocking her. (16:13-14)
  - 4. Delilah questioned Samson's love. (16:15-20)
  - 5. Delilah leads Samson to Philistine captivity. (16:18-22)  
(Proverbs 1:10, **“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”**)
- C. Samson's cry to God: spiritual restoration. (16:23-30)
  - 1. In Hebrews 11:32, Samson is ranked as one of the heroes of the faith.
  - 2. His final victory in the temple of Dagon may have been a factor in the defeat of the Philistines, recorded in I Samuel 7:7-14, shortly thereafter.

**Conclusion:** Samson was a person of great potential who fell short because of his sin and disobedience. Mighty in physical strength, he was weak in character and in resisting temptation. His life is a clear warning against the dangers of self-indulgence, lack of discipline, and ignoring God's Word.

## RUTH

**Text:** Ruth 3:18

**Introduction:** The Book of Ruth tells the story of a Moabite woman who married into a family of Israelites, but her husband and all the other men of the family died, leaving Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, in a desperate situation. Ruth accompanied Naomi back to Judah, where they scratched out an existence by gathering leftover grain in the fields. This led to Ruth's encounter with Boaz, a wealthy Israelite and distant kinsman of Naomi, who eventually married the Moabite Ruth. Their son became the father of David's father, making Ruth and Boaz the great-grandparents of Judah's most famous king.

When God writes the history of a life, He does it with the purpose of teaching us some lessons or to illustrate some truth we should know (cp. I Corinthians 10:11). The life of Ruth does both.

I. What The Old Testament Says About Ruth.

A. Ruth's Relationships. (Ruth 1)

1. Elimelech and Naomi, who lived during the days of the judges, along with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, journeyed from Canaan during a time of famine.
  - a. While in Moab, Elimelech died.
  - b. After his death, Mahlon married Ruth and Chilion married Orpah.
  - c. After ten years, Mahlon and Chilion also died, leaving Naomi, Ruth and Orpah destitute.
2. When Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people in Canaan, and that the famine was over, she determined to return to her land. (1:6-7)
  - a. She encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their own **"mother's house."** (1:8)
  - b. Orpah returns to her past, her country, her friends and her idols. (1:15)
  - c. Ruth steadfastly determines to go with Naomi. (1:16-18)
3. The chief point of Ruth's decision was that she took the God of the Hebrews as her God.
  - a. Her positive decision was for God: **"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."**
  - b. By a personal decision on her part, Ruth joined the *"family of God."* (John 1:12, **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."**)

B. Ruth's Reaping. (Ruth 2)

1. Ruth was young and excited over her new opportunity to care for Naomi.
  - a. Naomi had a **"kinsman"** named Boaz, and by marriage Boaz was also the **"kinsman"** of Ruth. (2:1)
  - b. Leviticus 25 teaches us that a **"kinsman"** had the right and obligation to redeem a distressed relative.
2. Under the Law, there were three requirements of a **"kinsman."**

- a. He must be willing to redeem.
- b. He must have the right to redeem.
- c. He must have the means to redeem.
- 3. In the case of Ruth, Boaz would become a **“kinsman-redeemer.”**
  - a. Boaz noticed Ruth and invited her to stay in his field to glean the corn.
  - b. He also saw her goodness and told his men to let Ruth work in the best part of the field and to give her **“handfuls on purpose.”** (2:11-12, 15-16)
- C. Ruth’s Rest. (Ruth 3)
  - 1. This chapter may seem strange to us, yet the actions here are in full agreement with the Hebrew customs of the day. (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)
  - 2. When Naomi sent Ruth to lie at the feet of Boaz, she was appealing to Boaz to honor the Israelite law and give love and shelter, as a husband, to Ruth. (3:1-5)
  - 3. Boaz understood Ruth’s intentions. (3:10-13)
  - 4. Ruth *“rested”* in the fact that Boaz would keep his word. (3:18)
- D. Ruth’s Reward. (Ruth 4)
  - 1. Ruth became the bride of Boaz because he redeemed all that had belonged to Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. (4:9-10)
    - a. There was an unknown kinsman before Boaz who refused to take the Moabitess Ruth to be his wife.
    - b. In public fashion, he handed over his right to Boaz.
  - 2. Notice the exciting genealogy listed in verses 17-22.
    - a. Ruth, a Gentile, became mother to **“Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.”**
    - b. Ruth would become the great-grandmother of King David.
    - c. Remember also that Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab *“the harlot.”*

## II. What The New Testament Teaches From Ruth.

- A. Ruth is a great picture of the believer’s salvation and service.
  - 1. Ruth’s decision (chapter 1) and service (chapter 2) were her part.
  - 2. Her rest (chapter 3) and reward (chapter 4) were God’s part.
- B. Boaz is a picture of our Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
  - 1. He was willing to redeem us.  
(Galatians 4:4-5, **“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”**)
  - 2. He had the right to redeem us.  
(Philippians 2:7, **“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”**)
  - 3. He had the means to redeem us.  
(John 10:11, **“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”**)

**Conclusion:** When Ruth had no hope in anyone other than Boaz, she knelt at his feet and was graciously received by him. So, today, Jesus Christ is our Kinsman-Redeemer and we are His bride.

## HANNAH

**Text:** I Samuel 1:1-2

**Introduction:** All we know about Hannah is found in the first two chapters of I Samuel.

Hannah's husband, Elkanah, was a Levite and belonged to one of the most honorable families of the priestly tribe, the Kohathites. Elkanah was an undistinguished priest who followed the common custom of polygamy in those days. His other wife, Peninnah, had children while Hannah remained barren. Though Peninnah made light of Hannah's condition, Hannah never showed any sign of revenge, and in spite of her bad treatment never caused any conflict within the family structure.

- I. Hannah's Predicament. (1:1-8)
  - A. Hannah's environment was not conducive to great dreams. (1:1-2)
    1. The people of Israel had lapsed from the high standards of a morality and spirituality set by Moses and the Law.
    2. In her own home, she was caught in a domestic triangle.
  - B. Elkanah and his family attended the solemn feasts in Shiloh each year. (1:3-5)
    1. One of the worst aspects of Hannah's plight was that she tended to feel worse when she went to "church."
    2. As Hannah saw parents and children coming together, she probably felt all the more grief because she had no part in the coming generation.
  - C. Peninnah, jealous because of Hannah, made light of her and her barrenness. (1:6-7)
  - D. Eventually her sadness became uncontrollable and spilled over into weeping. (1:8)
    1. The nation she loved had forsaken her God.
    2. The child she longed for seemed impossible.
    3. Elkanah, like any loving, concerned husband, tried to comfort his wife.
- II. Hannah's Prayer. (1:9-18)
  - A. Hannah had a plan. (1:9-10)
    1. Leaving her plate, she made her way to the Temple, where she wept and prayed.
    2. God sometimes forces us, by circumstances, into a place of desperation. (Psalm 120:1, "**In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.**")
  - B. Notice Hannah's prayer. (1:11)
    1. "**O Lord of hosts . . .**" she begins.
      - a. God is Lord of the hosts of heaven and earth, of everything He had created.
      - b. At His disposal stands an immense host of angels awaiting His direction.
    2. Unto the "**Lord**" she submits herself as "**thine handmaid.**"
      - a. With great humility, Hannah presented her petition.
      - b. With boldness, she prayed for a son with the holy intent of giving him back to God as a living sacrifice.
  - C. The decay of the people and the priesthood is indicated by Eli's initial response to her prayer. (1:12-14)
    1. In those days, drunk people were not an unusual sight in the house of God.

2. It has been suggested that the reason Eli made such a mistake regarding Hannah, was because he was out of touch with God and incapable of spiritual discernment.
- D. Hannah's response argues the serenity of her spirit. (1:15-16)
1. It is a breakthrough in our relationship with God when we recognize that God can handle our anger and frustration.
  2. This brings a new honesty to our prayers and worship of God.
- E. Eli became what he should have been all along – the representative of God. (1:17)
1. He did not know the nature of her request, but he knew enough theology to know that God heard her plea.
  2. When Hannah left the house of God, her countenance had change. (1:18)
- III. Hannah's Promise. (1:19-28)
- A. In due time, Hannah's son was born. (1:19-20)
- B. When the child was weaned, Hannah dressed him for his first trip to the Tabernacle, where she would leave him. (1:21-24)
- C. She brought the child to Eli, presenting an offering of dedication. (1:25-28)
1. The intensity of her faith glows as we read of her placing this young, impressionable boy in the hands of Eli.
  2. She had already placed her child into the hands of God, and she believed in her heart that God would answer the petition she had made before his birth.
  3. Samuel had been taught by his mother to worship God, and he did so. (1:28b)
- IV. Hannah's Praise. (2:1-10)
- A. Before Hannah left Samuel with Eli, she prayed to God a triumphant prayer.
1. She was grateful that her son, though young, could learn to perform many little duties in the Tabernacle.
  2. He could light a candle, hold a dish, or shut a door.
- B. Because he learned to do these menial tasks joyfully, he would rise to a greater ministry to the Lord.
- V. Hannah's Progeny. (2:11, 18-19, 26)
- A. Returning home with her husband, Hannah now began the routine of loving her little son from a distance.
1. Her loom was busy preparing clothing to fit the growing boy.
  2. Her prayers were that her son would remain spotless in the midst of a corrupt priesthood.
- B. Her concern was for his spiritual development.
1. Hannah was a lady of prayer; Samuel became a man of prayer.
  2. Hannah modeled her faith; Samuel became a giant of faith.
  3. Hannah was a handmaid of the Lord; Samuel became a great servant of the Lord.

**Conclusion:** Hannah was a woman of faith. She lived in a day of darkness – personally, politically, and spiritually. Yet she saw great light. When others had doubt, she had a belief in a God who truly cared. Psalm 34:18 reminds us, **“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”**

## SAMUEL

**Text:** I Samuel 1:19-20

**Introduction:** Samuel is the earliest of the great Hebrew prophets (after Moses) and the last judge of Israel. He led his people against their Philistine oppressors. When he was an old man, he anointed Saul as the first king of Israel and later anointed David as Saul's successor. He is spoken of highly by God when the Lord rebuked Israel in Jeremiah 15:1, saying, "**Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people . . .**"

## I. Samuel's Background.

- A. Samuel was the firstborn son of Hannah and Elkanah.
  1. His birth reveals a great deal about Hannah's faith. (I Samuel 1:2-22)
    - a. Unable to bear children, she prayed earnestly for the Lord to give her a child.
    - b. She vowed that if the Lord would give her a son she would raise him as a gift from God and dedicate him to the Lord's service. (Psalm 127:3)
    - c. His name means, "*asked of God.*"
  2. Hannah made good on her promise to dedicate her son to the Lord's service. (I Samuel 1:23-28)
    - a. Note the Hannah did not give Samuel to the Lord for a little while, but for "**as long as he liveth.**" (I Samuel 2:11)
    - b. At a very early age, Samuel went to live with Eli the High-Priest, who taught the boy the various duties of the priesthood.
- B. Eli was a deeply pious man who served the Lord as High-Priest in his day.
  1. However, Eli was a lax father who had no control over his sons. (I Samuel 2:12)
  2. God pronounced divine judgment on Eli because of his failure to discipline his sons. (I Samuel 2:27-31)
- C. Though raised in such ungodly surroundings, Samuel learned to "**minister unto the Lord.**" (I Samuel 2:11, cp. 2:18, 26, 3:1)

## II. Samuel's Calling.

- A. A spokesman for God was desperately needed. (I Samuel 3:1-2)
  1. That "**the word of the LORD was precious in those days,**" means, "*it had become rare or unusual.*"
  2. A spokesman for God was desperately needed. (Judges 21:25)
  3. That Eli's "**eyes began to wax dim**" was descriptive of Israel's quandary.
- B. A graphic description of Samuel's encounter is detailed. (I Samuel 3:3-18)
  1. The call came in the darkness of the night. (3:3-7)
  2. The call demanded a response. (3:8-10)
  3. The call included a message of personal judgment. (3:11-18)
- C. Four evidences of a call of God upon a life. (I Samuel 3:19-4:1)
  1. The Lord's presence and power upon a person's life. (3:19)

2. Recognition of God's hand upon a person's life by others. (3:20)
3. The Lord's continued fellowship with a person. (3:21)
4. A person's obedience is further proof of God's call upon a person's life. (4:1)

### III. Samuel's Ministry.

- A. As a prophet. (I Samuel 3:20)
  1. As a prophet, Samuel's faithfulness was a rebuke to the unfaithfulness of Eli.
  2. Under the impact of his courageous pronouncements Israel renounced her idolatry and shook off the yoke of the Philistines. (I Samuel 7:13)
- B. As a priest. (Psalm 99:6)
  1. He offered sacrifices. (I Samuel 7:9-10)
  2. He prayed for his people. (I Samuel 7:9, 12:23)
  3. He anointed kings. (I Samuel 10:1, 16:13)
- C. As a judge. (I Samuel 7:15-17)
  1. Even after the government of Israel had changed from that of a Theocracy to a Monarchy, Samuel still served as a circuit judge, going from place to place giving divine judgment upon moral and spiritual questions.
  2. He strived to maintain the law of Jehovah in the hearts and lives of his people.
- D. The Lord had Samuel serve as a prophet, priest, and judge because **“the word of the LORD was precious in those days;”** [and] **“there was no open vision”** (I Sam. 3:1).
  1. In addition to his work as prophet, priest and judge, he became author of the Books of First and Second Samuel.
  2. After his death, these books were completed by an unknown author.

### IV. Samuel's Disappointment.

- A. As Samuel got older, the people clamored for a king. (I Samuel 8:1-6)
  1. Taking it personally as a rejection of his godly service on their behalf, Samuel was reluctant to grant their request.
  2. He was also aware of the evils that went along with the establishment of a royal house. (I Samuel 8:10-18)
- B. The Lord allowed Samuel to see the real issue. (I Samuel 8:7-9, cp. 8:19-20a)

### V. Samuel's Death.

- A. The universal reverence and love the nation had for Samuel is proven by their grief manifested at his death. (I Samuel 25:1, 28:3)
- B. Samuel still had one more message to give. (I Samuel 28:3-19)
  1. After his death, Saul visited a fortune teller at Endor who gave one final message to Saul from the spirit of Samuel. (cp. 28:16)
  2. Even from the grave Samuel still spoke the Word of God.

**Conclusion:** In Hebrews 11:32, Samuel is joined by Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and David in God's heroic *“Fall of Faith.”* During his lifetime, Samuel was the lone figure of great faith among a people who rebelled against the Lord and refused to follow Him in righteousness and holiness. He was one of many who sensed their unworthiness before God, but who answered God's call and was used mightily.

## SAUL (KING)

**Text:** I Samuel 9:1-2

**Introduction:** Saul lived in turbulent times. For many years, Israel had consisted of a loose organization of tribes without a single leader. In times of crisis, leaders had risen, but there was no formal government. Samuel was Saul's predecessor as Israel's leader; but he was a religious leader, not a king. Threatened by the war-like Philistines, the people of Israel pressured Samuel to appoint a king "**like all the nations**" (I Samuel 8:5), to lead them in their battles against the enemy. Directed by the Lord, Samuel gave in to their demands and anointed Saul as the first king of the nation of Israel.

### I. Saul's Backdrop.

- A. Focusing on the ways of this world was a tragic mistake of the Israelites.
  - 1. For thirty-plus years, the Israelites had followed the leadership of Samuel, but now Samuel was about to pass from this world. (I Samuel 8:1-5)
    - a. Ever since the days of Moses, they had lived under a Theocracy, with God ruling and reigning over them.
    - b. But now, after centuries of looking around at other nations, the Israelites began to covet the form of government adopted by them.
    - c. The Israelites craved to establish a Monarchy, the rule of a king just "**like all the nations.**"
    - d. They wanted to break their covenant with the Lord and make an agreement with a charismatic leader who would become their savior, deliverer, protector, and provider.
  - 2. Samuel was instructed by God to give them their desire, but also to warn them as to what the outcome would be. (I Samuel 8:6-18)
    - a. God assured Samuel that their request was not the result of their rejection of him, but of God Himself. (8:6-7)
    - b. Forgetting how often the Lord had saved them in the past, the Israelites requested to establish a monarchy "**like all the nations**" (8:19-20).
- B. Saul had several admirable qualities that made him fit to be the first king of Israel. (I Samuel 9:1-2)
  - 1. He was tall and attractive.
    - a. In describing Saul, note what is stressed: not his character, integrity, righteousness, or wisdom, but his appearance.
    - b. Judging from outward appearance, Saul seemed to have great potential for leadership and service. (John 7:24)
  - 2. He was of the tribe of Benjamin.
    - a. The tribe of Benjamin was situated on the border between Ephraim and Judah.
    - b. Thus, he would appeal to both the northern and southern sections of Israel.
  - 3. He was a capable military leader, as would be seen in his earliest victories.

- C. Saul was also a man of humility. (I Samuel 9:21)
  1. Saul not only demonstrated humility, but also a respectful attitude. (9:22-27)
  2. Furthermore, he showed a degree of self-control when the “**children of Belial**” (10:27) despised and criticized him.
  3. Though Saul had natural ability, his Adamic nature eventually started him on the downward path to ruination.

## II. Saul’s Blunders – Seven Steps.

- A. His sin of impatience. (Cp. I Samuel 10:8 with 13:8-14)
  1. Saul impatiently violated the priestly function of offering a sacrifice to the Lord.
  2. Because of his self-will and impatience, the Lord rejected him as king.
- B. His sin of disobedience. (I Samuel 15:1-9)
  1. The Israelites, under Saul’s leadership destroyed only the weak animals and the things of little value.
  2. Instead of being the agent of God’s judgment, Saul became the agent of his own selfish desire for wealth.
- C. His sin of rebellion. (I Samuel 15:17-23)
  1. Simply stated, the Lord had sent Saul on a very specific mission.
  2. Saul confused “*good intentions*” with obedience.
- D. His sin of selfishness. (I Samuel 16:14)
  1. The hand of God’s judgment had fallen on Saul, and an evil spirit began creating a sense of guilt, depression, and fear within him. (Romans 8:1)
  2. God had given Saul up to his “**reprobate**” ways. (Romans 1:28)
- E. His sin of jealousy. (I Samuel 18:8)
  1. Saul became paranoid and suspected that there was a plot by David and others to overthrow his kingdom.
  2. From this moment on, Saul began to keep a jealous, watchful eye on David.
- F. His sin of witchery. (I Samuel 28:3-7)
  1. When we are facing desperate situations, seeking the Lord for help is always the right answer. (Isaiah 55:7)
  2. But, when we are facing desperate situations, if we continue to live with iniquity in our hearts, “**the Lord will not hear [us]**” (Psalm 66:18).
  3. When Saul sought out the witch of Endor, he sunk to the lowest depths of sin.
- G. His sin of suicide. (I Samuel 31:1-4)
  1. Saul’s troops stood no chance against the massive army arrayed against Israel.
    - a. In the midst of the fierce fighting, Saul himself was critically wounded.
    - b. Instead of being caught by the enemy and facing torture, Saul choose suicide.
  2. When God pronounced judgment, it will take place.

**Conclusion:** Saul is one of the most tragic figures in the Old Testament. From him we learn that it takes much more than a good family background and a handsome physique to be a godly servant. Obedience to the Lord is far more important in achieving success than any other factor. Though Saul began his reign with great promise, he ended it in greater shame. As Israel’s first king, he possessed the opportunity to do great things for the Lord, but when his rebellion took over his life came crumbling down.

## DAVID

**Text:** I Samuel 16:1-13

**Introduction:** David was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse, a respected citizen who lived in the city of Bethlehem. His mother is best remembered for her humility of service to the Lord. Of her, David wrote, in Psalm 116:16, **“O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid . . .”** Nothing else is known of David’s mother.

In Bethlehem, David developed in strength, courage, and attractiveness while caring for his father’s sheep. In time, he became the second king of the Hebrew people, ancestor to Jesus Christ, and writer of numerous psalms. He has been described as Israel’s greatest king and ranks with Moses as one of the most commanding figures in the Old Testament.

### I. David’s Youth.

A. David’s youth was spent in Bethlehem.

1. The region was known for its fertile hills and valleys.
2. The city’s name means, **“the house of bread.”**
3. Micah 5:2 describes it as **“little among the thousands of Judah.”**
4. It would be here that the Savior would be born, Who was called **“the Bread of Life”** (John 6:35).

B. As the youngest son of Jesse, David was keeper of his father’s sheep.

1. He was quick to learn submission to his father. (I Samuel 17:17-20)
2. As a shepherd, he showed great courage and faithfulness by killing both a lion and a bear which attacked his father’s flock. (I Samuel 17:34-36a)
3. By his actions, David becomes an example of the principle that Paul taught young Timothy. (I Timothy 4:12, cp. I Samuel 18:5a, 14, 30).

C. As a lad, David displayed outstanding musical talent with his harp.

1. When Saul was rejected as king, the prophet Samuel anointed him as the future king of Israel.
2. Apparently there was no public announcement of the event at the time.

### II. David’s Service.

A. King Saul, forsaken by God, and on occasion troubled by an evil spirit, was subject to mood swings of depression. (I Samuel 16:14-17)

1. His attendants advised him to secure a harpist, whose music might soothe his spirit. (Cp. Ephesians 5:19)
2. David was recommended for this task. (I Samuel 16:18-19, 23)
3. As harpist for Saul, David was exposed to governmental affairs, a task that prepared him for his later service as king of Israel.

B. During one of David’s return visits to Bethlehem, the Philistines invaded the country and camped just 24 miles west of Bethlehem. (I Samuel 17:1)

1. It was there that Goliath’s challenge for a Hebrew to do battle with him stirred David’s spirit.

2. David faced Goliath with only a sling and an unflinching faith in God. (I Samuel 17:45-49)
  3. For this feat, he became a hero in the eyes of the nation, but aroused jealousy and animosity arose in the heart of Saul. (I Samuel 18:5-9)
  4. As David's popularity grew, Saul's fear increased until he could no longer hide his desire to kill him. (I Samuel 18:10-11)
- C. David was forced to flee with Saul in pursuit.
1. On at least two occasions, David could have killed Saul, but he refused to **“stretch forth [his] hand against the LORD's anointed.”** (I Samuel 24:4-6, 10, 26:8-16, 23)
  2. When Saul was later killed at Gilboa, in a battle against the Philistines, David mourned his fate. (II Samuel 1:17ff)

### III. David's Kingship.

- A. At Saul's death, the tribe of Judah, to whom David belonged, anointed him as king of Judah and placed him on the throne in Hebron. (II Samuel 2:1-4)
1. Seven years later, he was anointed king over all of Israel. (II Samuel 5:3)
    - a. David immediately set about uniting the kingdom by capturing the fortified city of Jebus – Jerusalem. (II Samuel 5:6-7)
    - b. After setting up his new political capital, David proceeded to reestablish and strengthen the worship of God. (II Samuel 7:1-3)
  2. God established an eternal covenant with David – **“house,” “throne,”** and **“kingdom.”** (II Samuel 7:12-17)
- B. Although David was a righteous king, he was subject to the temptations of sin.
1. On one occasion, when his army went to battle, David stayed home. (II Samuel 11:1)
    - a. This led to his great sin with Bathsheba. (II Samuel 11:2-5)
    - b. Then in an effort to cover up his sin, he had Uriah killed in battle. (II Samuel 11:6-15)
    - c. David was confronted by the prophet Nathan, who courageously exposed his wrongdoing. (II Samuel 12:1-9)
    - d. Faced with his sin, David repented and asked for God's forgiveness. (Psalm 51:1-4)
  2. David's greatest sin was his self-reliant numbering of the people of Israel. (II Samuel 24:1-4, 9-10)
    - a. Although David committed deep sin, he still was known as a man who sought God's will.
    - b. Certainly he was not perfect, but he was willing to repent of his wrongdoing and to follow God's leadership.

**Conclusion:** The Jewish historian Josephus praised David by saying, *“This man was of an excellent character, and was endowed with all the virtues that were desirable of a king.”* But even higher praise came from God Himself through a message delivered by Paul in Acts 13:22, where he quotes the words of the Lord, saying **“I have found David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart.”** (Cp. I Samuel 13:14)

## SOLOMON

**Text:** II Samuel 12:24-25

**Introduction:** Solomon succeeded David his father as king of Israel. His rise was met with widespread approval from the people, though David's officials were slow to accept him as their new king. They did warm up considerably when they realized that David had determined to anoint Solomon as his heir.

Besides becoming the third king of Israel, Solomon also authored the books of Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, drawing greatly from the wisdom God had endowed him with.

- I. Great Beginnings.
  - A. Solomon assumed leadership of Israel at a time of great material and spiritual prosperity.
    1. Solomon was about 20 years old when he was crowned. (I Kings 2:12)
    2. During his 40-year reign, he expanded the kingdom until it covered about 50,000 square miles – from Egypt in the south to Syria in the north, to the borders of Mesopotamia in the east, and the Mediterranean in the west.
  - B. One of the first things Solomon did as king was go to Gibeon to offer sacrifices to the Lord. (I Kings 3:3-4)
    1. God appeared to the new king at night and said, “**Ask what I shall give thee**” (I Kings 3:5).
    2. Solomon asked for “**an understanding heart**” to judge the people of Israel and the ability to “**discern between good and bad.**” (I Kings 3:6-9)
    3. God not only granted Solomon's request, but He also promised him great riches and honor if he would walk in the steps of his father. (I Kings 3:10-14)
- II. Great Wisdom.
  - A. Solomon is usually remembered as a wise man.
    1. His Proverbs and his “*Song of Songs*” demonstrate his deep knowledge of the natural world (plants, animals, etc.)
    2. He also had a profound knowledge of human nature, as demonstrated by the two women who claimed the same child. (I Kings 3:16-28)
      - a. His suggestion that the child be physically divided between the two was a masterful strategy for finding out who was the real mother.
      - b. After reviewing the facts, and then applying the principle of maternal instinct and love, Solomon was able to get to the truth.
    3. One of the greatest needs in the world today is men and women possessing “*the wisdom of Solomon.*” (Proverbs 9:10)
      - a. Without wisdom, societies disintegrate and collapse.
      - b. Without wisdom, families fall to dangers. (Matthew 7:24-27)
  - B. During his lifetime, Solomon's fame as a man of wisdom spread to surrounding lands, and leaders came from afar to hear him speak.

1. When the Queen of Sheba came to test his wisdom, he answered all her questions with ease. (II Chronicles 9:1-8)
  - a. After she saw the extent of his empire and the vastness of his knowledge, she confessed that she had underestimated him.
  - b. The result of following God's wisdom are God's abundant blessings.
2. Russell Dilday, in The Preacher's Commentary on 1, 2 Kings, writes, *"When Jesus used the queen of Sheba as an illustration in Matthew 12, He pointed to the fact that she was a seeker, and that she was to be commended for her quest. At great sacrifice, humility, and effort she made her way to the best source of truth available to her. The passage has a lesson for desperate seekers today. A greater than Solomon has come. His wisdom is infinitely greater. His power is greater. He is the way and the truth. Every question has its ultimate answer in Him. He is the satisfaction of every yearning. And when we meet Him, we too find that the half has not been told. He is greater than our highest expectations."*

### III. Great Buildings.

- A. One of Solomon's first major feats was the construction of the Temple. (I Kings 5:1-5)
  1. The date of the beginning of the Temple construction was 480 years after Israel came out of Egyptian bondage. (I Kings 6:1)
    - a. The construction would take seven years. (I Kings 6:38)
    - b. The construction of the Temple was not famous for its size, but for the quality of its elaborate workmanship. (I Kings 6-7)
  2. The "**Glory of the Lord**" filled the Temple at its dedication. (I Kings 8:1-11)
- B. After the dedication, the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time. (I Kings 9:1-3)
  1. The Lord reminded Solomon that Solomon's petition concerning the continuation of his kingdom was conditional. (I Kings 9:4-7)
  2. This warning of the Lord was an exact prophecy which took place later in the history of Israel. (I Kings 9:8-9)

### IV. Great Sin.

- A. Near the end of his life, Solomon lost the ideals of his youth.
  1. His writings in Ecclesiastes, proclaiming "**all is vanity**," (1:2), support the view that the world's wisest man had become a pathetic figure in his old age.
  2. Tragically, after the building of the Temple, Solomon did very little to promote the religious life of his people.
- B. Power and fortune, things intended to be a blessing to him and his nation, led to Solomon's transgression against God. (I Kings 11:1-8)
  1. Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 17:17 came to pass – "**Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away . . .**"
  2. God does get angry with sin, no matter who gets involved in it. (I Kings 11:9-13)

**Conclusion:** Though considered a wise man, his foolishness regarding sin got the better end of him. He should have heeded his own advise written in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.**"

**ELIJAH**

**Text:** I Kings 17:1a

**Introduction:** Elijah shaped the history of his day and dominated Hebrew thinking for centuries afterward. He was an influential prophet who lived during the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Elijah's prophetic activities emphasized the unconditional loyalty to God required of Israel. He was opposed to the accepted standards of his day, when belief in many gods was normal. He appeared in the role of God's instrument of judgment upon a wayward people because of widespread idolatry. The miracles that Elijah performed occurred during a period of a life-or-death struggle between the religion of Jehovah and Baal worship.

Though his lessons in life are supernatural, James 5:17 reminds us that he **"was a man subject to like passions as we are . . ."**

- I. Prediction Of Drought. (I Kings 17:1-24)
  - A. In I Kings 16:28-34, Ahab became king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
    1. When Ahab became king, the Bible says that he **"did evil above all that were before him"** (I Kings 16:30).
      - a. He married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon.
      - b. He built an alter to Baal in Samaria, the capital city of Israel.
      - c. His and Jezebel's worship stood in opposition to the Lord God of Israel.
    2. Elijah appeared as God's man at this critical time in Israel's history.
      - a. God's people are not always given the best climate in which to work.
      - b. Elijah ministered in a time when the national leadership was so ungodly and corrupt that the heavens would be used to bring God's judgment.
      - c. The first thing Elijah did was pronounce judgment in the form of a drought.
  - B. A godly man like Elijah was certainly never popular with a wicked idol worshiper like Ahab, but when Elijah's prediction of drought came to pass the prophet's popularity plummeted. (17:1)
    1. It is not always easy or convenient to serve God, but it is always right and better than walking in the ways of the world.
      - a. God told Elijah to go into hiding, so the prophet sought refuge by a brook that flowed into the Jordan. (17:2-7)
      - b. God also used a widow lady at Zephath to sustain him. (17:8-9)
    2. While the widow was rejoicing in God's perpetual care, her son fell sick and suddenly died. (17:17)
      - a. God used Elijah to raise her son from the dead. (17:18-22)
      - b. This feat authenticated the power of God upon Elijah. (I Kings 17:24)
- II. Contest On Mount Carmel. (I Kings 18:1-40)
  - A. In all the pages of history such opposites had never met. (18:1-2)
    1. Ahab, the servant of Baal; Elijah, the servant of Jehovah God.
    2. Ahab, the son of darkness; Elijah, the prophet of fire and light.

- B. Ahab immediately tried to blame Elijah for the desperate conditions of the country. (18:17-18)
  - 1. Elijah was God’s man standing against the nation of Israel, its king, its leaders, and its false prophets, but he showed no fear.
  - 2. Although **“a man subject to like passions as we,”** Elijah met this situation with faith in God and not any inherent power in himself.
- C. Elijah invited the prophets of Baal, and the false prophets from Jezebel’s house, to meet him on Mount Carmel. (18:19-20)
  - 1. At the mountain, Elijah drew *“a line in the sand,”* demanding that the people choose either God or Baal. (18:21)
  - 2. Joshua had put this same issue clearly before the people of his day, **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . .”** (Joshua 24:15).
- D. The confrontation. (18:22-24)
  - 1. The servants of Baal offered their sacrifice. (18:25-29)
  - 2. Elijah offered his sacrifice. (18:30-35)
    - a. In twenty seconds, Elijah prayed 63 words, and fire fell. (18:36-38)
    - b. Elijah’s prayer is described in James 5:16, **“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”**
  - 3. God answered prayer caused the people to fall on their faces and confess the Lord as the true God. (18:39)
    - a. After the demonstration of the power of God, Elijah called on the people to demonstrate their faith by their works. (18:40)
    - b. Elijah pronounced the end of the drought. (18:41)

### III. Flight From Jezebel. (I Kings 19:1-18)

- A. Jezebel seeks Elijah’s life. (19:1-2)
- B. Despondent Elijah flees. (19:3-4)
- C. Elijah is ministered to. (19:5-8)
- D. Elijah talks with God. (19:9-14)
- E. Elijah is recommissioned. (19:15-18)

### IV. Ascension To Heaven.

- A. The prophet of Israel did not die, but was, instead, carried bodily to heaven in a whirlwind. (II Kings 2:1-11)
- B. This was an honor previously bestowed only upon Enoch. (Genesis 5:24)
- C. Unknown – *“The prophet of fire, who successfully challenged the god of fire, ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire.”*

**Conclusion:** Elijah was unknown when he is first introduced to us in the Old Testament, but God took a relatively unknown and made him into one of His greatest messengers. Elijah had only what God had given to him. He had no earthly goods, no formal education, not even a family as far as we know. But God took this **“man subject to like passions as we”** and made of him a *“prophet of fire.”* The Lord still needs people who are willing to give their all to declare God’s judgment to a nation that has forgotten Him.

**ELISHA**

**Text:** I Kings 19:15-16, 19-21

**Introduction:** Elisha's work was basically the same as that of Elijah: resistance to the worship of Baal. He may have come from a wealthy family, since he was plowing with a team of oxen in a field where twelve other teams preceded him at the time of his call. Elisha's decision to follow Elijah was final and decisive. He killed his own oxen to prepare a farewell feast for relatives and friends, and he used the wood from his tools as fuel for the fire.

- I. Elisha – His Passion. (II Kings 2:1-11)
  - A. His prayer – “**A double portion.**” (2:9)
  - B. God's answer. (II Kings 2:13-8:15, 13:14-21)
    1. *Divided* the Jordan. (2:13-14)
    2. *Purified* the spring of Jericho. (2:19-22)
    3. *Cursed* the lads at Bethel. (2:23-24)
    4. *Supplied* water for kings. (3:1-27)
    5. *Filled* vessels with oil for a widow. (4:1-7)
    6. *Raised* a Shunammite's son from the dead. (4:8-37)
    7. *Purified* poison stew at Gilgal. (4:38-41)
    8. *Multiplied* loaves and grain to feed 100 men. (4:42-44)
    9. *Healed* Naaman's leprosy. (5:1-19)
    10. *Transferred* Naaman's leprosy to Gehazi. (5:20-27)
    11. *Saved* a lost axe-head in the Jordan River. (6:1-7)
    12. *Foretold* Syrian secret plans to Israel. (6:8-12)
    13. *Prayed* that his servant's eyes would be opened. (6:13-17)
    14. *Blinded* the eyes of the Syrian Army. (6:18-23)
    15. *Promised* relief to besieged Samaria. (6:30-7:20)
    16. *Returned* a Shunammite's property. (8:1-6)
    17. *Pronounced* Benhadad's death, the king of Syria. (8:7-15)
    18. *Foretold* Israel's three victories over Syria. (13:14-19)
    19. *Raised* a dead man to life after his death. (13:20-21)
- II. Elisha – The Person.
  - A. Spiritual Status – Several factors show that Elisha was spiritually mature.
    1. Miracles.
      - a. The performance of many miracles was certainly a sign of spirituality.
      - b. It is questionable that God would have entrusted such power to a person who was not walking faithfully before Him.
      - c. Spiritual maturity is a mark of those who use those gifts that God has given to them for His purposes.
    2. Rebuke.
      - a. Elisha was willing to give rebuke at times, even when it would have been easier to speak another kind of message.

- b. He might have been flattered by the three kings that came to him in Moab, but he rather clearly rebuked them, especially Jehoram. (3:9-14)
  - 3. Revelation.
    - a. God was pleased to respond when Elisha needed revelation.
    - b. His servant's eyes were opened when faced with his fears. (6:13-17)
  - 4. Life.
    - a. He raised the dead boy at Shunam. (4:32-37)
    - b. In his own death, a man's body was resurrected that simply touched the bones of Elisha. (13:20-21)
- B. Command of Respect.
  - 1. Jehoram did not respond in anger to Elisha when he was rebuked for his worship of the Baal prophets.
  - 2. Both Hazael (II Kings 8:7-15) and Jehu (9:1-13), at the times of their anointing, readily accepted the authority of this man.
  - 3. Jehoash acknowledged the aged prophet's authority when he was told to shoot the arrow through the window, and later accepted Elisha's rebuke. (13:14-19)
- C. Compassion.
  - 1. He purified a spring of water that people might drink. (2:19-22)
  - 2. He made financial provisions for a helpless widow to be able to pay her debts. (4:1-7)
  - 3. He removed poison from food. (4:38-41)
  - 4. He healed the commander of a foreign army who had leprosy. (5:1-19)
  - 5. He restored the axe-head for a young man who had borrowed the axe. (6:1-7)
- D. Indifferent to wealth.
  - 1. He readily left his affluent home and followed Elijah. (I Kings 19:19-21)
  - 2. To go with Elijah meant leaving all and submitting to the meager life of a prophet.
  - 3. When Naaman experienced a remarkable restoration of health, he urged Elisha to receive a large remuneration, consisting of **“ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment”** (5:5), but Elisha responded, **“As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.** (5:16).
- E. Courage.
  - 1. He did not quiver before the foreign commander Naaman. (5:9-11)
  - 2. He did not cater to the foreign king-to-be Hazael. (8:11-13)
  - 3. He simply told the Word of God as it had been delivered unto him.
- F. Energy.
  - 1. His activities took him from northern Israel to southern Moab.
  - 2. Several of his miracles involved students in the prophetic schools, as he moved from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho, seeing to it that the schools continued to operate properly and had adequate provisions.

**Conclusion:** Everywhere he went, he gave out God's word, urging people to repent and turn to God. The fact that his dead bones were used of God to give life to a man is probably representative of the work of Elisha did all during his ministry. He was a man who continually gave out his life to people around him, as he urged them to do the will of God and thus experience the blessings of true life that only God can give.

## JOASH

**Text:** II Kings 11:1-2

**Introduction:** The eighth king of Judah, son of King Ahaziah (II Kings 11:2) by Zibia of Beersheba (II Kings 12:1), Joash was only seven years old when he became king, and he reigned 40 years in Jerusalem.

King Ahaziah was the son of Jehoram and Athaliah. When King Ahaziah of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was killed by King Jehu of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, arose and destroyed all of the royal seed of David, except one, Joash, claiming the throne of the Southern Kingdom for herself. Athaliah was also the daughter of King Ahab, seventh king of Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the infamous Jezebel, making her half Israelite and half Phoenician.

Joash is a significant link in the fulfillment of II Kings 8:19, which states, **“Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant’s sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children.”**

- I. Preserved Line (Of David) Through Joash. (II Kings 11:1-3)
  - A. The **“lamp”** of David (Psalm 132:17) was almost extinguished and yet wonderfully preserved.
    1. As if all the previous deaths recorded earlier were not enough, Queen Athaliah made sure that all the children in the line for the throne of Judah were killed.
    2. She murdered the royal seed from a spirit of revenge and rage against God.
    3. She sought to destroy the line of David, a foolish attempt, because God had already promised to perpetuate David’s line.
  - B. One son of the royal family – the baby Joash – did escape the murderous rampage of Athaliah.
    1. As the drama unfolds, Joash is the only surviving descendant of David.
    2. In saving his life, God’s power is seen moving events in order to fulfill His promise to David – that his family would rule over God’s people forever.
    3. This would ultimately be fulfilled in the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ.
  - C. Rescuing Joash was a godly woman name Jehosheba, who was the wife of the High Priest Jehoiada. (II Chronicles 22:11)
    1. Being also a princess of royal blood, she knew from the very beginning about Athaliah’s murderous rampage.
    2. Having access to the royal palace, she was able to snatch baby Joash away to save his life and secretly hide him away in the Temple.
    3. Thus, Joash was secretly reared in the Temple during the entire reign of Athaliah.
- II. Preparation For Joash. (II Kings 11:4-11)
  - A. The plot to secure the throne of David’s only surviving heir was planned by the High Priest Jehoiada. (11:4-8)
    1. He made the Temple guards swear an oath of loyalty to the dynasty.
    2. He planned well his presentation of Joash.

- B. He planned a brilliant strategy for the guards to overthrow Queen Athaliah and to place young Joash on the throne. (11:9-11)
  - 1. The revolution was launched during the changing of the guards on the Sabbath.
  - 2. This allowed a maximum number of soldiers to be available to carry out the coup.

### III. Presentation Of Joash. (II Kings 11:12)

- A. Suddenly, Joash was brought out and presented with the announcement that he was a true descendant of David and the rightful heir to the throne of Judah.
- B. Note the tokens of power, obligation, and leadership given to Joash at his coronation:
  - 1. Jehoiada “**put the crown upon him**” declaring his kingly authority.
  - 2. He further “**gave him the testimony,**” or the Word of God, to guide him. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)
  - 3. They “**anointed him,**” recognizing God’s choosing of him. (I Samuel 16:3, 13)
  - 4. They “**made him king . . . and they clapped their hands**” in celebration of joy and relief from Athaliah. (Proverbs 14:34)
  - 5. They shouted, “**God save the king,**” submitting themselves to his authority. (I Peter 2:13)

### IV. Promotion Of Joash. (II Kings 11:13-16)

- A. Only one step was left to secure the throne: the execution of Queen Athaliah.
  - 1. As she entered the Temple, she saw the boy king standing by the pillar where only kings stood.
  - 2. She further saw the officers and trumpeters surrounding the boy in celebration.
- B. No doubt, stunned by the sight, she tore her robes in an act of despair and began shouting, “**Treason, Treason.**”
  - 1. In reality, the only treason was when Athaliah slaughtered her own grandsons.
  - 2. Arresting her, Jehoiada ordered she be executed outside the Temple.

### V. Prevalence Of Joash. (II Kings 11:17-21)

- A. The reign of Joash began well and continued as long as Jehoiada, the priest, lived and instructed the young king. (II Kings 12:1-2)
  - 1. The most important work accomplished during the reign of Joash was the repairing of the Temple, which had been neglected. (II Chronicles 24:7-14)
  - 2. When Jehoiada died, the nation lost a great man of influence over a young king. (II Chronicles. 24:15-18, cp. Romans 14:7)
- B. Although Joash began well, like so many before him, he failed to persevere in his waning years.
  - 1. After Jehoiada’s death, Joash lost all sense of reverence and gratitude.
  - 2. He even killed the son of Jehoiada, the priest who had raised him. (II Chronicles 24:19-22)
  - 3. Earlier in life, Joash displayed one serious character flaw that revealed itself later – he was only half-hearted in his commitment to the Lord. (II Kings 12:3a)

**Conclusion:** Though God miraculously preserved David’s line through Joash, Joash failed to finish strong. He forsook the counsel of his spiritual mentor. Who are you mentoring?

## JONAH

**Text:** II Kings 14:23-25

**Introduction:** Skeptics today would have us deny the validity and possibility of the narrative found in the Book of Jonah. But, when you think of the story of Jonah, what do you think of? Probably, Jonah and the whale. It was G. Campbell Morgan who rightly put it: *“Men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they have failed to see the great God.”*

- I. Jonah’ Disobedience. (Jonah 1)
  - A. His commission. (1:1-2)
  - B. His disobedience. (1:3)
    1. Jonah turned from God’s Word.
      - a. God’s Word could not be halted from coming unto him.
      - b. It came to him unbidden.
      - c. God never considered obedience as an option.
    2. Jonah turned from God’s presence.
      - a. He knew that escape from an omnipresent God is impossible. (Psalms 139:7-10)
      - b. Jonah could only flee from God’s *“felt presence.”*
      - c. Jonah endeavored to go as far away as he could from that spot on the map where God had written the name *“Jonah.”*
    3. What was Jonah’s difficulty?
      - a. It was not that he misunderstood God’s Word.
      - b. Jonah’s difficulty was moral in nature – his will collided with God’s will.
    4. Jonah’s flight from God was at a great price. (1:3)
      - a. He paid a literal price.
      - b. Every time we run from God we pay a price. (Galatians 6:7)
  - C. Three results of Jonah’s disobedience: (1:4-16)
    1. He became guided by circumstances rather than God’s Word. (1:3b)
    2. He became powerless in a time of crisis. (1:5)
    3. He became ashamed of his ministry denying his **“occupation”** as a prophet of the Lord. (1:7-9)
  - D. Jonah meets a great fish. (1:17)
- II. Jonah’s Return Ticket. (Jonah 2)
  - A. Jonah recognized that the affliction came from God’s hand. (2:1-3)
    1. Jonah’s whole experience could have been put down simply to misfortune.
    2. That could never be the perspective of a man with an awakened conscience which is sensitive to the touch of God.
  - B. Jonah recognized that the chastisement was for his sin. (2:4)
    1. When the tunnel through which he passed seemed to be unending gloom, Jonah began to see the light and hope.

2. His fresh perspective began changing the way of his thinking.
- C. Jonah recognized that Grace was in God's heart. (2:5-9)
  1. God's grace had produced a new sense of self. (2:5-7)
  2. God's grace had produced a new sense of compassion. (2:8)
  3. God's grace had produced a new sense of consecration. (2:9a)
  4. God's grace had produced a new sense of God. (2:9b)

### III. Jonah's Obedience. (Jonah 3)

- A. His re-commissioning. (3:1-2)
- B. The Lord says something slightly different to Jonah the second time. (cp. 1:2 with 3:2)
  1. In the first instance a clear message was given to him.
  2. In the second instance, the clear command was to render total obedience.
- C. Jonah's message led to revival. (3:4-5)
  1. His message was clear and simple.
  2. He spoke with the power of God.
  3. Through Jonah, they recognized the voice of the living God.

### IV. Jonah's Contradiction. (Jonah 4)

- A. Jonah was displeased because the people of Nineveh repented.
  1. Notice the difference between God's response to Nineveh's repentance and Jonah's response. (3:10, 4:1)
  2. Jonah should have been the happiest man on the face of the earth. (James 5:20)
- B. What was Jonah's complaint? (4:2-3)
  1. That God had shown mercy to the people of Nineveh.
  2. It seems unthinkable that any person who calls himself a man of God could be angry because God was merciful to others.
- C. Jonah's rebuke by God. (4:5-8)
  1. God smote Jonah's conscious one last time. (4:9-11)
    - a. Despite all he had been through Jonah had not yet learned the lesson that the immortal souls of men are the most precious thing in the universe.
    - b. Jonah seemed to care more about plants than about people.
  2. Could the same be said about us as Christians?
    - a. Do we care more about the items in our gardens, the produce of our fields, or perhaps the contents of our garage, or home, than we do about other men and women and the spread of the Gospel to them?
    - b. Are we angry inwardly that God should impose upon us such a burden as going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.
    - c. A missionary once said, *"One of the greatest sins we commit is not getting on our knees and asking God to call our young people, our sons and daughters, to the mission field."*

**Conclusion:** The closing chapter of the story of Jonah is indeed sad. The Book closes though with God's universal love being set in contrast to Jonah's selfishness. God was not finished with Jonah. Philippians 1:6 reminds us, **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."**

## HOSEA

**Text:** Hosea 3:1

**Introduction:** Hosea, the son of Beeri (Hosea 1:1), ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel during the chaotic period just before the fall of the nation in 722 B.C. The literary features within Hosea's book suggest he was a member of the upper class. The tone and contents of the book also show that he was a man of deep compassion, strong loyalty, and keen awareness of the political events taking place in the world at that time. As a prophet, he was also deeply committed to God and His will as it was being revealed to His covenant people. The unique thing about Hosea is that he lived God's message before his people.

- I. Israel's Unfaithfulness Pictured. (Hosea 1-3)
  - A. Hosea married a woman named Gomer, but God warned him that she would break his heart. (1:2)
    1. God's warning was true: Gomer bore Hosea three children, then left him for others.
    2. In response to Gomer's departure, God commanded Hosea to go find his wayward wife and he discovered her being sold in a slave market. (3:1-2)
  - B. All of this pictured Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord.
    1. The nation was married to the Lord and should have remained faithful to Him.
    2. Israel had forsaken the true God and worshiped the idols of her enemies.
    3. The false gods of the other nations promised her many pleasures, but she discovered, too late, that there was pain and sorrow as well.
    4. Like Gomer, Israel would go into slavery because of her sins.
    5. But that is not the end of the story, for as Hosea sought out his wife and brought her back so the Lord would seek out His people and bring them back to Himself.
  - C. We cannot leave these chapters without pointing out that spiritual adultery can also be a sin of Christians as well. (James 4:4)
    1. Christians who love the world and live for sin are false to their Savior and break His heart.
    2. Paul warned the Corinthians against this sin. (II Corinthians 11:1-3)
- II. Israel's Sins Proclaimed. (Hosea 4-7)
  - A. No doubt all the neighbors talked about Gomer's sins and pointed an accusing finger toward her.
    1. Hosea pointed a finger back at them and revealed their sins. (4:1-2)
    2. The nation tried to cover her sins with a shallow "*religious revival*." (6:1-7)
  - B. Hosea pictures the spiritual condition of the people.
    1. "**As a morning cloud**" (6:4), they were here one moment and gone the next.
    2. As a half-baked cake, or "**a cake not turned**" (7:8), their religion had not gotten deep into their lives, but only on the surface of things.

3. With “**gray hairs**” (7:9), they were losing their strength but ignorant of the change.
4. As “**a silly dove**” (7:11), they were unstable, flittering about from one political ally to another.
5. As “**a deceitful bow**” (7:16), they were undependable.

### III. Israel’s Judgment Pronounced. (Hosea 8-10)

#### A. The backslider is always punished.

(Proverbs 14:14a, “**The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways . . .**”)

1. Christians who break their testimony for the Lord do not lose their salvation, but they do lose their joy, power, and usefulness; and they suffer the discipline of God. (Psalm 51:8-12)
2. Hosea could see Assyria coming to punish the nation and deliver it into slavery.
3. He pictures this coming judgment as:
  - a. A swift eagle. (8:1)
  - b. The wrath of a whirlwind. (8:7)
  - c. The burning of a fire. (8:14)
4. The nation is going to be scattered. (9:17)
5. They are going to reap more than they have sown. (10:12-15)

#### B. Sinners always reap more than they have sown, because few seeds planted multiply into a large harvest.

(Galatians 6:7-8, “**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.**”)

### IV. Israel’s Restoration Promised. (Hosea 11-14)

#### A. Hosea does not end on a gloomy note.

1. He sees the future glory of the nation. (14:1-3)
2. Just as his wife was brought back from slavery and restored to his home and heart, so the nation would one day be restored to her land and to her Lord.
3. These closing chapters magnify the faithful love of God in contrast to the unfaithfulness of His people.

#### B. It was God’s grace that redeemed Israel from her slavery in Egypt and provided for her every need. (11:1)

1. From the beginning of this “*marriage*” between Jehovah and Israel, the people were “**bent on backsliding.**” (11:7)
2. God “**drew them with cords**” of love (11:4), but they tried to break those cords and go their own way.
3. Sin is not only the breaking of God’s Law, but also the breaking of God’s heart.

#### C. Chapter 14 is God’s loving appeal to His “*wife*” to return to His heart and blessing.

**Conclusion:** Don’t miss the personal message here: backsliders may return to the Lord, experience His forgiveness (I John 1:9), and be restored to the place of blessing and usefulness.

## ISAIAH

**Text:** Isaiah 1:1

**Introduction:** The Introductory notes of the Scofield Reference Bible has this to say about Isaiah: *“Isaiah is justly accounted the chief of the writing prophets. He has the more comprehensive testimony and is distinctively the prophet of redemption. Nowhere else in the Scriptures written under the Law have we so clear a view of grace. The New Testament Church does not appear, but Messiah in His Person and sufferings, and the blessing of the Gentiles through Him, are in full vision.”*

- I. Isaiah, The Man. (1:1)
  - A. The son of Amoz.
    1. Tradition tells us that Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah, who was a brother to Uzziah the king.
    2. This would make Isaiah the first cousin of King Uzziah.
  - B. He was a man of the city.
    1. His ministry extended from 748 B.C. to about 700 B.C., in the city of Jerusalem.
    2. He lived his whole life in Jerusalem.
  - C. Isaiah was an aristocrat.
    1. He was a man of culture and always seemed at home in the king’s court.
    2. He grew up in the days of influence and prosperity under King Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam II (Israel).
      - a. With this prosperity, though, came vice.
      - b. The history and the Book of Isaiah read like the lives of many Americans who have grown up knowing nothing but wealth and plenty.
      - c. Isaiah lived in this type of atmosphere and saw his people plunge into sin.
  - D. Isaiah was a poetic genius as he declared the message of the Lord.
    1. He was a great speaker and a perfectionist with words.
    2. His figures of speech were from the Lord.
  - E. Isaiah had a wife (8:3), and two sons.
    1. His first son was named **“Shear-jashub,”** meaning, *“a remnant shall return.”* (7:3)
    2. His second son was named **“Maher-shalal-hash-baz,”** meaning, *“speed the spoil.”* (8:1)
  - F. Isaiah was a man of boldness and integrity.
    1. He spoke with boldness, as need might have been, but with love and tenderness.
    2. He was a man who listened to the Lord.
  - G. The historical background to Isaiah is found in II Kings 15-20 and II Chronicles 26-33.
- II. Isaiah, The Prophet. (1:1-2)
  - A. Isaiah 1:1 presents what the Lord revealed to him and the time frame in which Isaiah lived and preached.

1. He saw a vision about Judah and Jerusalem during the days of four kings.
2. The message begins with, **“Hear . . . for the LORD hath spoken.”** (1:2)
- B. Isaiah’s first vision. (1:1-31)
  1. God’s judgment against Judah. (1:1-15)
  2. God’s plea with Judah. (1:16-19)
  3. God’s warning to Judah. (1:20)
  4. God’s promise to Judah. (1:21-31)
- C. Isaiah’s second vision. (2:1-5:30)
  1. Again, Isaiah wrote what he **“saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”** (2:1)
  2. He preached the Word as it was delivered unto him.

### III. Isaiah, His Commission. (6:1-13)

- A. A vision of the Lord. (6:1-5)
  1. The Lord gave Isaiah a vision of His exaltation and majesty. (6:1)
    - a. Over and above the dead king, Uzziah, there was one true King of the nation of Israel.
    - b. John 12:41 tells us that the prophet saw the Lord Jesus, the visible manifestation of God.
    - c. The design of this magnificent vision was to impress Isaiah with a sense of the holiness of God.
    - d. It was also to impress upon him the weight of his commission to come.
  2. The Lord gave Isaiah a vision of His glory. (6:2)
    - a. Around the throne were the seraphims, celestial angels of the Lord.
    - b. The picture before us is derived from the customs of Monarches, particularly Eastern Monarches, who had numerous princes and nobles to attend them, and to give magnificence to their court.
  3. The Lord gave Isaiah a vision of His holiness. (6:3)
    - a. The seraphims sang **“Holy, holy, holy.”**
      - (1) One would cry **“holy.”**
      - (2) The second repeated it.
      - (3) The third would follow.
    - b. In unity they probably united in the grand chorus, **“The whole earth is full of his glory.”** (Cp. Psalm 148:1-13)
  4. The Lord gave Isaiah a vision of His power and presence. (6:4)
- B. A conviction of unworthiness. (6:5-7)
  1. Isaiah was stricken with a profound sense of unworthiness. (6:5)
  2. Knowing the genuineness of Isaiah’s heart, the Lord met his need. (6:6-7)
- C. A surrender to the Lord. (6:8-13)
  1. When Isaiah heard God’s call, he responded favorably. (6:8)
  2. Isaiah was commissioned by the Lord to be His spokesman. (6:9-13)

**Conclusion:** Like Isaiah, before we can serve the Lord, we must first see and acknowledge Him as our Lord, as the high and exalted Creator of the universe, the Holy One who is to be worshiped and served. Second, we must confess and repent of our sins. And then, we must surrender to the Lord’s call and commission.

**HEZEKIAH**

**Text:** II Kings 18:1-3

**Introduction:** Hezekiah was one of the best kings who ever sat upon the throne of Judah.

Sincere and devout, he was not a perfect man, nor outstanding because of any brilliant gifts. This good king, however, is to be admired when one remembers his family background. His father, King Ahaz, was a wicked king who took the sacred things of the Temple and made sacrifice with them to idols (II Chronicles 29:19). Having such a wicked, apostate father as King Ahaz, the wonder is that his son became the noble king that he did.

With Hezekiah's ascent to the throne at the age of twenty-five there began a period of spiritual revival in which he was encouraged by the noblest and most eloquent of the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, who knew how to carry his faith into his politics.

- I. Hezekiah's Righteousness. (II Kings 18:1-6)
  - A. At some point in Hezekiah's early life he made a deep spiritual commitment to the Lord and lived a righteous life. (18:1-3)
    1. Only four kings are said to have followed the godly example of David: Asa (I Kings 15:11), Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:43), Josiah (II Kings 22:2), and Hezekiah (II Kings 18:3).
    2. What company will you be associated with? (I Corinthians 15:33)
  - B. Hezekiah launched a reformation throughout the nation that had been unmatched since the days of David and Solomon. (18:4-6)
    1. He destroyed the altars and images of the false gods.
    2. He trusted the Lord more than all the other kings of the Southern Kingdom.
    3. Unlike some of the other good kings, who slipped back into sin or failure, he held fast to the Lord and persevered to the very end. (I Corinthians 15:58)
- II. Hezekiah's Reforms. (II Chronicles 29:3-30:27)
  - A. He repaired and opened the doors of the Temple. (29:3-11)
    1. His wicked father had closed the Temple and barricaded the door in an attempt to eradicate the worship of the Lord. (29:3)
    2. As soon as the doors were opened and repaired, Hezekiah summoned all the religious leaders of the nation to a meeting to declare his intent. (29:4-11)
  - B. He cleansed the Temple of its contaminants. (29:12-19, esp. vs. 16)
    1. The church must be sanctified, cleansed from all defilement and kept holy.
    2. Unknown – *"The church building becomes a symbol of our need to worship and of the LORD's presence among us when we worship faithfully."*
  - C. He rededicated the Temple by reinstating its services. (29:20-36, esp. vss. 27-29)
    1. For many, worship has become dull, uninteresting, irrelevant, impractical, and having little to do with our day-to-day lives.
    2. What is desperately needed today is a revitalized, new beginning in worship. (Romans 1:16)

- D. He re-instituted the Passover. (30:1-12, esp. vs. 5)
  - 1. For over 200 years, the Passover had been neglected as a national celebration.
  - 2. Letters were sent out to all the people of Israel and Judah inviting them to return to the Lord and worship at the Temple.
  - 3. The response to the courier's proclamation was mixed. (30:10-12)
- E. He launched a genuine revival. (30:13-27)
  - 1. Note Hezekiah's prayer in verses 18b-20, "**The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.**"
  - 2. So great was the spirit of revival that the people asked to continue their celebration an extra seven days. (30:23)
  - 3. We must be about the Lord's business, seeking both revival and renewal. (Psalm 85:6, "**Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?**")

### III. Hezekiah's Restoration – From Sickness. (II Kings 20:1-11)

- A. "**In those days**" Hezekiah became deathly sick and was soon to die. (20:1-3)
  - 1. The Lord sent Isaiah to the king with the message to "**set [his] house in order.**"
  - 2. Facing death, Hezekiah "**turned his face to the wall,**" and got alone with God.
  - 3. In his prayer, he reminded the Lord of three facts:
    - a. He had been faithful in following the Lord.
    - b. He had been wholly devoted to the Lord.
    - c. He had behaved righteously before the Lord.
  - 4. In one short sentence of prayer, we see Hezekiah as the model of righteousness, devotion, and faithfulness.
- B. Hezekiah's brief prayer and bitter tears went straight to the heart of God. (20:4-6)
  - 1. God had heard his prayer and seen his brokenness, therefore, the Lord would heal him.
    - a. In fact, the Lord would add 15 years to his life and would deliver him and Jerusalem from Assyria.
    - b. As a "**sign**" that the Lord would perform that which He promised, the sun miraculously moved back ten degrees in the "**[sundial] of Ahaz.**" (20:7-11)
  - 2. There is no limit to the power of prayer, for there is no limit to God's power.

### IV. Hezekiah's Relief.

- A. Hezekiah foolishly received a Babylonian envoy, who had come to pay their respects to the healed king, and showed them all the treasures of his kingdom. (Isaiah 36:12-19)
- B. When Jerusalem came under siege by the Assyrians (II Chronicles 32:2-8), Hezekiah sought the Lord in prayer (II Chronicles 32:20), who miraculously answered by slaying 185,000 Assyrians (Isaiah 37:36-37).

**Conclusion:** Attested to by his righteous life, Hezekiah's greatest acclaim might be that "**he trusted in the LORD**" and therefore, "**the LORD was with him; and he prospered**" (II Kings 18:5, 7).

## JOSIAH

**Text:** II Chronicles 34:1-2

**Introduction:** Josiah was the sixteenth king of Judah, son of Amon, grandson of Manasseh, and great-grandson of Hezekiah. He was the last godly king to reign over God's people. For three decades his reign was characterized by peace, prosperity, and reform. Hence, they were among the happiest years experienced by Judah. King Josiah devoted himself to pleasing God and re-instituting Israel's observance to the Mosaic Law. That a wicked king like Amon could have such a godly son and successor is a tribute to the grace of God. The Bible focuses almost exclusively on Josiah's spiritual reforms, which climaxed in the eighteenth year of his reign with the discovery of the Book of the Law.

- I. Josiah's Godly Reforms. (II Chronicles 34:1-33)
  - A. He was concerned about righteousness. (34:1-7)
    1. Josiah's father had been assassinated by his own royal officials. (33:24-25)
      - a. Soon afterward the people reacted to an uprising and executed Amon's assassins, placing Josiah on the throne to succeed his father.
      - b. Whatever the political reasons for the assassinations, there was a deep and legitimate concern that the Davidic line continue on the throne.
    2. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign. (34:1)
      - a. This meant that he was probably under the tutelage of others until he became old enough to govern the nation on his own.
      - b. His mother, Jedidah, was probably also instrumental in rearing her son in the knowledge of the Lord. (II Kings 22:1)
    3. Josiah never deviated from David's godly example. (34:2)
      - a. He began seeking the Lord at the age of sixteen. (34:3a)
      - b. He began purging Judah and Jerusalem of all false worship at the age of twenty. (34:3b-5)
    4. Josiah also sought to purge the false worship from the people still remaining in the northern Israel. (3:6-7)
  - B. He was concerned about worship. (34:8-13)
    1. At the age of twenty-six, Josiah made the critical decision to restore the Temple and to reinstate true worship of the living God. (34:8)
      - a. Fund-raising for the Temple repairs was assigned to the High Priest and the religious workers. (34:9)
      - b. Once collected, the monies were dispersed to the workers. (34:10-11)
    2. Both the supervisors and the laborers worked diligently and faithfully. (34:12-13)
    3. It was Josiah's legitimate concern about the beliefs and worship of his people that led him to restore the Temple and reestablish true beliefs and worship.
    4. Moses had previously sang, "**Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?**" (Exodus 15:11).

- C. He was concerned about God's Word. (34:14-28)
    - 1. During the restoration, a copy of God's Law was discovered in the Temple. (34:14-18)
      - a. For at least 75 years God's Word had been lost.
      - b. When the 55 years of Manasseh's rule is added to the two years of Amon's reign, and then the 18 years, so far, of Josiah's reign, it has been 75 years since God's Word had been available to the people.
      - c. The significance of finding the scroll of God's Word cannot be overemphasized.
    - 2. Listening to God's Word brought conviction to King Josiah and an appointed delegation to study the Book as to its full message. (34:19-21)
    - 3. The appointed delegation quickly proceeded to consult with the prophetess Huldah for the meaning of God's Word. (34:22-25)
      - a. It is interesting that the Lord used Huldah for the task, seeing that there were three other well-known prophets active at this time: Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.
      - b. God gave Huldah the important mission of predicting the coming judgment of the fall of Jerusalem and Judah.
    - 4. Despite the terrifying message of judgment, the LORD had a very special message of mercy for King Josiah. (34:26-28)
    - 5. In the face of coming judgment, to how many has the Word of God been lost to today? (II Peter 3:3-7)
  - D. He was concerned about obedience. (34:29-33)
    - 1. To bring about a conversion to the Lord, Josiah summoned all the leaders and citizens to the Temple for a renewal service. (34:29)
    - 2. With the mass of people assembled, Josiah took God's Word and read it to the people. (34:30, cp. Romans 10:17)
    - 3. Josiah personally renewed his covenant with the Lord, and then challenged the people to do likewise. (34:31-32)
    - 4. After the renewal, Josiah launched a major reform throughout all Israel. (34:33)
    - 5. A heart changed must be followed up with action. (John 15:10)
- II. Josiah's Great Celebration. (II Chronicles 35:1-27)
- A. Josiah's Passover celebration. (35:1-19)
    - 1. Preparations for the Passover. (35:1-6)
      - a. Note the repeated refrain in verses 4 and 6: **"prepare yourselves . . . prepare your brethren."**
      - b. Preparation was needed to **"do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses"** (35:6).
    - 2. Provisions for the Passover. (35:7-9)
    - 3. Presentations for the Passover. (35:10-15)
    - 4. Success of the Passover. (35:16-19)
  - B. Josiah's tragic death. (35:20-27)

**Conclusion:** Josiah's life demonstrated a deep concern for righteousness and true worship.

## JEREMIAH

**Text:** Jeremiah 1:1-10

**Introduction:** Jeremiah was born to Hilkiah, who was the son of Ithamar of Anathoth.

Anathoth was a tiny village about three miles north of Jerusalem. He grew up in the midst of the priestly office. He lived during the days of the prophets Nahum and Zephaniah. His background, temperament, and ability qualified him in a unique way for the work God had for him.

His ministry began in the 13th year of the reign of Josiah, about 60 years after the death of Isaiah. After the death of Josiah, the kingdom of Judah was ushered away in the Babylonian Captivity. Jeremiah remained in the land of Judah ministering to the poor remnant until joining them later in Egypt. His love for his nation, its struggles, and its downfall gives us something of the times in which Jeremiah lived.

- I. Jeremiah's Call. (1:1-5)
  - A. The Word of the Lord spoke loudly in the ears of Jeremiah. (1:4)
    1. Before his birth, he was chosen by the Lord to be a prophet to the nations. (1:5)
    2. The years of Jeremiah's ministry were to span the final days of the nation's existence and the actual execution of God's judgment on the people.
  - B. Notice the striking words of the call:
    1. **"I formed thee."**
    2. **"I knew thee."**
    3. **"I sanctified thee."**
    4. **"I ordained thee."**
  - C. Do we see this type of purpose in our life?
- II. Jeremiah's Response. (1:6-8)
  - A. Jeremiah responded like most of us would respond.
    1. He felt his inexperience and his weakness as a man.
    2. Moses, Isaiah, and others had the same attitude at their calling.
  - B. Unknown – *"The Lord's callings are His enablings."* (1:7)
    1. The Lord gave Jeremiah encouragement and strength for the task. (1:8)
    2. As Jeremiah went forth, he could rest assured that the Lord would be with Him and would deliver him through all the trials, opposition, and persecution that would confront him.
- III. Jeremiah's Commission. (1:9-10)
  - A. The Lord had a difficult task for Jeremiah to do and He commissioned him to do it.
    1. He touched Jeremiah's mouth with His hand and put His words in his mouth.
    2. We don't preach a message of our own making.
    3. Our message comes to us from the Lord.
  - B. God further warned Jeremiah of the opposition that he would face. (cp. 1:17-19)

#### IV. Jeremiah's Preaching.

- A. Jeremiah had a heart for his nation, yet he knew he had to deliver the message of the Lord, and, as usual, most people did not want to hear that message.
  - 1. The men of Anathoth, his home town, were the first to oppose Jeremiah. (11:19)
    - a. Jeremiah addressed the Lord regarding their threats. (11:20)
    - b. The Lord answered Jeremiah with His pronouncement of coming judgment. (11:21-23)
  - 2. Telling Judah that they were out of the will of God caused more hostility throughout the land toward Jeremiah. (18:18)
    - a. Again, Jeremiah's response was to turn to the Lord in prayer. (18:19-23)
    - b. How do we justify Jeremiah's prayer of vengeance on the nation?
      - (1) Righteous Indignation!
      - (2) Jesus prayed, "**Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**" (Matthew 6:10, cp. Romans 12:19-21)
- B. Again, and again, Jeremiah preached the coming judgment of God. (20:1-6)

#### V. Jeremiah's Grief. (Cp. Lamentations)

- A. Jeremiah was more introspective than the other prophets, always looking within himself. (9:1)
  - 1. He loved his nation, and yet God had told him what to do, and at times his declaration hurt him as much, if not more than the people.
  - 2. When he preached the judgment of God, his heart often would break.
- B. He often cried, and even wanted to quit. (20:7-9)
  - 1. He lived a lonely life with no love, comfort or encouragement of a wife or family.
  - 2. He became known as "*The Weeping Prophet.*"

#### VI. Jeremiah's Message Of Hope.

- A. His message of the "*Potter and the Vessel.*" (18:1-10)
  - 1. The message of hope is that Israel was chosen as an honorable vessel.
  - 2. The sorrow is that by her constant rebellion, she went against God.
- B. His message of the "*New Covenant.*" (31:31-34)
  - 1. This New Covenant would supersede the Law of Moses.
  - 2. This New Covenant provided exactly what the Law demanded.
    - a. Knowledge – "**I will put my law in their inward parts . . .**"
    - b. Obedience – "**And write it in their hearts . . .**"
    - c. Consecration – "**I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . .**"
    - d. Fellowship – "**They shall all know me . . .**"
    - e. Cleansing – "**I will remember their sin no more . . .**"

**Conclusion:** Jeremiah must have had a character and nature much like the Lord Jesus Christ. His compassion, his words of love, heartbreak, judgment, and future events make proof of such a thought. When Jesus asked His disciples, "**Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**" the response was, "**Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets**" (Matthew 6:13-14). How we must emulate the character of our Lord.

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR

**Text:** Daniel 1:1-2

**Introduction:** Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon. His father had a successful campaign against the Assyrians and founded the Babylonian Empire. Babylonia was a region of western Asia with Babylon as its capital. Nebuchadnezzar was by far the most famous of all the kings of the East. His was the first “*world-wide empire*” that the then known world had ever seen.

Why should we study Nebuchadnezzar? Because he was a significant character in the Bible. He was a notable king in his day. He is mostly remembered for his bad deeds, although the Lord God of Israel had a sovereign plan for his life. As we consider his life, we will see some good also, as well as the bad.

- I. What The Bible Says About Nebuchadnezzar.
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar took Judah and Jerusalem into captivity for seventy years.
    1. This was in direct fulfillment of the words of Isaiah, the prophet, as spoken to Hezekiah. (II Kings 20:17-18)
    2. Jeremiah made a similar prophecy. (Jeremiah 25:9-11)
      - a. Notice, in verse 9, that the Lord called Nebuchadnezzar “**my servant.**”
      - b. In verse 11, Jeremiah lists those things which would be taken away.
    3. Among his captives were Daniel, with his three friends. (Daniel 1:3-7)
  - B. Nebuchadnezzar’s first test concerned these four servants of God.
    1. The king commanded them to eat and drink from his table.
    2. They refused, knowing that some of the food was forbidden by the Law of God. (Daniel 1:8)
    3. After ten days of only herbs (pulse) and water, the four Hebrews looked better and were fatter in flesh than the ones who ate the king’s food and drink. (Daniel 1:15-16)
    4. Instead of being mad and consumed with power, Nebuchadnezzar saw in them a unique wisdom. (Daniel 1:18-19)
  - C. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar. (Daniel 2:1)
    1. The great dream of the king was interpreted by Daniel in chapter 2.
    2. In his interpretation, Daniel told the king of the destruction of his own kingdom.
    3. Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to Daniel’s revelation is important. (Daniel 2:46-47)
  - D. The image of Gold and the King’s reaction. (Daniel 3:1)
    1. As the ruler of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar built an image of himself made of gold on the plain of Dura and called for the people to worship it.
      - a. This was self-deification.
      - b. Some form of the word “**worship**” is used 3 times in Daniel 3:5-7.
    2. The three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, refused to bow down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar.
      - a. The king placed them into a furnace seven times hotter than usual.

- b. God delivered them from the fire.
  - 3. Again, Nebuchadnezzar learned a lesson about the Lord God. (Daniel 3:25, 28-29)
- E. The testimony of Nebuchadnezzar.
  - 1. The testimony of the king in Daniel 4:1-3 belongs chronologically at the end of chapter 4.
  - 2. The entire fourth chapter contains the testimony of a Gentile king relating how he came to the knowledge of the true God, Jehovah.
    - a. This chapter was a Babylonian state document.
    - b. It was a confession of his faith in Jehovah.
- F. The Sovereignty of God. (Daniel 4:17)
  - 1. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel told him of the power of God and of His rule.
    - a. God is sovereign in the lives of men and nations.
    - b. Daniel restated the same thing in the interpretation of the dream. (Daniel 4:25)
  - 2. The vision was fulfilled in Nebuchadnezzar's life. (Daniel 4:31-33)
  - 3. After an extended period of time of being humbled before God, Nebuchadnezzar's true spirit is revealed. (Daniel 4:34)
- G. From Judgment to Mercy.
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar was judged by the Lord.
  - 2. He had been a very cruel man.
    - a. In Jeremiah 29:21-22, he is found roasting two Jews in a fire.
    - b. In II Kings 25:7, he put out Zedekiah's eyes after he slew Zedekiah's sons.
    - c. He brought misery to the world by uprooting people and deporting them.
    - d. In his pride and arrogance, he built the greatest city on the face of the earth.
  - 3. But judgment was pronounced upon him and God did exactly what He said He would do.
    - a. The judgment was harsh, but the king learned a tremendous lesson.
    - b. With judgment in the past, the great mercy of the Lord is seen in Nebuchadnezzar's actions and words. (Daniel 4:36-37)

## II. Lessons To Be Learned From Nebuchadnezzar.

- A. **“That the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”** (Daniel 4:17, cp. 25 and 32)
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar took every lesson from Daniel and God with a deep sense of humility.
  - 2. He never got angry with the Jews or God for their correction.
  - 3. He never got angry with Daniel for telling him what to do.
- B. Our lives, our leaders, our nation, our pastors, and our teachers are important to the Lord, and He still directs in the affairs of men, great and small.

**Conclusion:** Daniel 4:37 records these words, **“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”** May we humble ourselves before God.

## DANIEL

**Text:** Matthew 24:15

**Introduction:** In Matthew 24:15, Jesus makes reference to two passages found in Daniel 9:27 and 11:31. What Daniel wrote was prophecy inspired by God. Although a prophet, he was of a different breed. All the other prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, were to go to the people and proclaim the Word of the Lord. Daniel was to record what was revealed to him through visions (see Daniel 12:4 and 9).

Daniel was of noble, if not royal, blood (Daniel 1:3). We know nothing of his parents, but only that he was of the tribe of Judah. At about the age of 20, Daniel was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Although but a youth, he possessed wisdom beyond his years. He also exhibited a spotless character. He was referred to three times as “**greatly beloved**” (9:23, 10:11, 10:19). Even though Daniel was in captivity, there was “*a note of birth, and breeding, and aristocracy about his whole character,*” writes Alexander Whyte, a great English preacher.

- I. What The Old Testament Says About Daniel.
  - A. Background information.
    1. The prophecy of the 70 years captivity of Judah was foretold in Jeremiah 25:8-11.
      - a. Daniel was taken in the first deportation to Babylon. (Daniel 1:1)
      - b. Daniel became aware of Jeremiah’s prophecy. (Daniel 9:2)
    2. Four Hebrews, including Daniel, who met Nebuchadnezzar’s qualifications in Daniel 1:3-4, were taken and made eunuchs in Babylon.
      - a. They were placed under the prince of the eunuchs, who changed their Hebrew names. (Daniel 1:7)
      - b. This was to wean them from their land.
      - c. This was to wean them from their faith in the Lord God.
      - d. This was to get them to adopt the religion and habits of Babylon.
    3. Note that changing a person’s name does not always change his character.
  - B. Daniel was God’s representative in Babylon.
    1. It was God’s purpose to make the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrew nation, the leading nation of the world.
      - a. Their disobedience and idolatry prevented that.
      - b. The earthly reign was transferred from Israel to Babylon.
    2. God raised up Daniel to speak for Him in the courts of Babylon.
      - a. The only hope for the Hebrews in captivity was this man, Daniel.
      - b. He spoke in such a fashion, with the power of God, that even the Jews in captivity realized that the Lord was still their God. and they were His people.
- II. The Miracles and Prophecies of Daniel – some highlights.
  - A. Daniel and his friends refused to defile themselves with the king’s meat. (Daniel 1)
    1. They ate only bread and water and appeared fairer and fatter than the others.

2. The result of their stand for God is found in Daniel 1:17.
- B. The meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. (Daniel 2)
  1. The king had a dream which was a summation of the entire course of the "*Times of the Gentiles.*"
  2. None of the astrologers and magicians could interpret the dream.
  3. Daniel and his three companions prayed. (2:17-18)
  4. God revealed the meaning of the dream to Daniel in a night vision.
  5. Daniel gave testimony of the power of God to the king. (2:28)
  6. Then Daniel sets forth the meaning of the dream by describing the world powers from Babylon to the kingdom of Heaven.
- C. Daniel interprets the Tree Vision of the King. (Daniel 4)
  1. Daniel had to tell Nebuchadnezzar that God still ruled over men and nations.
  2. This could have spelled doom for Daniel, but he was faithful to the Lord.
- D. Belshazzar and the Handwriting on the Wall. (Daniel 5)
  1. The grandson of Nebuchadnezzar witnessed God's handwriting on the wall.
  2. Daniel witnessed to the power of God and told what the writing meant. (5:25-31)
- E. Daniel in the Lion's Den. (Daniel 6)
  1. Daniel refused to bow down to a decree from man.
  2. Because of his stand, he was thrown into the den of lions, but not harmed.
  3. Through this, King Darius acknowledged the living God. (6:26)
- F. Daniel's prophetic vision. (Daniel 7)
  1. The Lord reveals to Daniel another message concerning the world powers.
  2. This was God's way of writing prophecy.
    - a. All these world powers have come and have fallen.
    - b. The prophecy of the man of sin (7:24-25), and the kingdom of our Lord (7:27) is again emphasized.
- G. Daniel's 70 weeks. (Daniel 9)
  1. The very date of the Messiah's entrance into Jerusalem was foretold. (9:25-26)
  2. The week of Tribulation is predicted. (9:27)
  3. What was predicted, and what has already come to pass in reference to chapter 9, is already a miracle of God.
- H. Israel in the Latter Days. (Daniel 10-12)
  1. Daniel was able to declare the Word of the Lord and interpret the future from Darius to the Man of Sin yet to come.
  2. As John wrote in Revelation, so Daniel wrote about the end-times.

### III. Lessons We Learn From Daniel.

- A. Daniel was taken to Babylon at about 20 years of age.
  1. He lived there through the third year of Cyrus—well into his 80's.
  2. All of his life he remained faithful to his call as a spokesman for God.
- B. The secret to Daniel's victorious life was prayer. (Daniel 6:10)

**Conclusion:** Throughout the book of Daniel, one thought continues to arise over and over again. Daniel 4:17, 25, and 32 says, "**that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will . . .**"

**EZEKIEL**

**Text:** Ezekiel 1:1-3

**Introduction:** Ezekiel's ministry was a very difficult one. He was called to serve the discouraged Jews who had survived the war with Babylon only to find himself exiled with them to its pagan capital. While still in Jerusalem, he may have been a pupil of Jeremiah, eventually preaching the same message which that prophet preached – the certainty of Judah's punishment for her sins. While Ezekiel ministered in Babylon, Jeremiah had been allowed to remain in Jerusalem where he prophesied and ministered until the final fall of the city. By the time of Ezekiel's arrival into exile, Daniel had already been in Babylon for nine years. Needless to say, Ezekiel lived during chaotic times of political and moral upheaval.

- I. Ezekiel – The Man And His Book.
  - A. Ezekiel, whose name means “*God will strengthen,*” was a prophet of a priestly family carried captive to Babylon in 597 B.C. when he was about 25 years old.
    1. His call to the prophetic ministry came five years later.
    2. He prophesied primarily to the captives who dwelt by the River Chebar at Tel Abib (in modern day Iraq).
    3. He identifies himself as a priest, “**the son of Buzi**” (1:3).
  - B. A repetitive theme of Ezekiel's writing is, “**And ye shall know that I am the LORD**” (6:7, and again 61 other times).
    1. Ezekiel explained the action of God in causing and permitting Israel's captivity.
    2. Their captivity was a result of unspeakable abominations for which they had been guilty.
    3. Their captivity was also punitive; by their punishment they would come to know that God is God.
    4. The Babylonian Captivity cured the Jews of their idolatry.
- II. Ezekiel – His Wife.
  - A. He was married to a woman described as “**the desire of thine eyes**” (24:16).
    1. One of the saddest notes of his life was the death of his wife.
    2. In Ezekiel 24:1-2, the prophet was told that on the day he received this revelation, his wife would die, as the armies of Babylon laid final siege against Jerusalem.
    3. Ezekiel's sadness at the death of his wife was to match the grief of God at the judgment of Jerusalem for her sin.
    4. Ezekiel was commanded not to grieve her death; he was to steel himself for this tragedy even as God prepared for the death of His beloved city. (24:15-22)
  - B. Perhaps no other event in the lives of the Old Testament prophets is as touching as this.
    1. The harshness of God's command to His prophet emphasizes the Lord's grief over the fate and sufferings of His rebellious people.
    2. Believers have been called upon to suffer many indignities through the ages, but in the sufferings of Ezekiel we learn something of the sufferings of God Himself.
  - C. Ezekiel shows us just how ugly and serious our sin is.

1. Our rebellion brings grief and hurt to God, against whom our sin is directed.
2. Perhaps this is why God acted to dramatically in dealing with the human condition – by sending His Son to die in our place and set us free from the bondage of sin.

### III. Ezekiel – His Book.

- A. Ezekiel’s call and commissioning. (Chapters 1-3)
  1. Scripture gives more space to Ezekiel’s call than to the call of any other person in the Bible.
  2. This fact emphasizes the importance of studying the details of his call. (2:1-3)
- B. Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem. (Chapters 4-24)
  1. The LORD raised up Ezekiel to preach the truth of what lay ahead for the people if they continued to live wickedly and worship false gods.
  2. Pre-eminent in this series of sermons is the departure of the Shekinah Glory of God from the Temple.
    - a. God’s glory was first revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. (Exodus 24:15-17)
    - b. God’s glory filled the tabernacle in its completion. (Exodus 40:34-35)
    - c. God’s glory inhabited Solomon’s Temple at its dedication. (I Kings 8:10-11)
    - d. God’s glory moved from above the Mercy Seat to the threshold of the Temple because of many abominable practices. (Ezekiel 8:1-16, 9:3a)
    - e. God’s glory further withdrew to the East Gate in judgment. (Ezek. 10:18-19)
      - (1) Had Jesus been accepted as Messiah at His first coming, Jesus presumably would have entered the Temple by this same gate.
      - (2) When rejected, He withdrew through it. (Matthew 21:12-17)
    - f. God’s glory finally withdrew to the Mount of Olives, the same place to which Jesus had withdrawn to. (11:23)
    - g. God assured a godly remnant that His glory would return. (11:14-20)
    - h. Some suggest that “*Bethlehem’s Star*” is the returning Glory of God.
- C. Prophecies against seven surrounding Gentile nations. (Chapters 25-32)
  1. If God’s chosen people did not escape the judgment of God, how can people who harden their hearts against Him expect to get ahead? (I Peter 4:17)
  2. Because of their defiance, God’s hand of judgment will fall on these.
- D. Prophecies regarding Israel’s restoration. (Chapters 33-39)
  1. Many scholars believe that Ezekiel 37:1-6 finds beginning fulfillment in Israel’s national restoration on May 14, 1948.
  2. Chapters 38 and 39 describe a future attack on Israel and God’s deliverance of His people.
- E. Prophecies regarding the Millennial Kingdom. (Chapters 40–48)
  1. These chapters are a complement to the many predictions of judgment announced.
  2. He now foresees the rebuilding of the Temple, the establishment of a right relationship with God, and the reorganization of national life.

**Conclusion:** Ezekiel begins his message with an astonishing vision of the holiness and majesty of God. He closes with the holy and eternal city filled with the eternal presence of God. Never again will people rebel and turn away from God and His ways. His people will be given an inheritance, and God Himself will dwell among them, “**and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there**” (Ezekiel 48:35).

**EZRA AND NEHEMIAH**

**Text:** Ezra 1:1-4

**Introduction:** Ezra and Nehemiah, along with Esther, cover the last century of Old Testament history. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah give an account of the remnants' return to the land and the city, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the city walls. The inspiring accounts of these two books were written as both warnings and promises to every reader.

**I. The Times.**

- A. After Judah's 70 years of Babylonian captivity (beginning in 606 B.C.), the Persian conqueror, King Cyrus the Great, issued a decree allowing any Jew who wished to return to Jerusalem to do so.
  - 1. In 559 B.C., after the death of his father Cambyses, Cyrus began his reign over Anshan, a small territory in modern Iraq.
  - 2. In 550 B.C., Cyrus took control of both Median and Persian nations, enlarging the Persian Empire in all directions.
  - 3. In 539 B.C., Cyrus conquered Babylon, and then extended the Persian Empire over the huge territories today known as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Israel.
  - 4. In 538 B.C., Cyrus issued the "*Proclamation of Freedom*" that allowed the Jewish captives to return to their homeland. (II Chronicles 36:22-23)
  - 5. The decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem was in direct fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10, cp. Daniel 9:1-2)
- B. Three groups of Jews returned to Jerusalem from exile.
  - 1. In 538 B.C., 49,697 returned under Sheshbazzar's (Zerubbabel's) leadership. (Ezra 1:8, Zechariah 4:9)
  - 2. In 515 B.C., the Temple was finally rebuilt.
  - 3. In 458 B.C., an additional 2,000 returned under Ezra's leadership. (Ezra 7:7)
  - 4. In 445 B.C., an unnumbered third group returned under Nehemiah's leadership with an emphasis on rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 2:9)

**II. The Men.**

- A. Ezra.
  - 1. Ezra was a great figure in Jewish history.
    - a. He was the founder of "*The Great Synagogue*," a group of Jewish scholars who recognized the Canon of Scripture and settled it as the Word of God.
    - b. These Old Testament books are the ones we have in our Bible today.
  - 2. The Biblical account of Ezra begins in chapter 7.
    - a. Ezra was a descendant of Aaron. (7:1a, 5b)
    - b. He was a ready scribe of the Law. (7:6)
    - c. He returned to Jerusalem with a prepared heart. (7:10)
    - d. He was sent by King Artaxerxes to inquire about the civil and religious conditions in Jerusalem and whether they conformed to the teaching of God's Law. (7:14)

- e. He was to take all that the king and the people had given him for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. (7:15-20)
  - 3. Ezra was a great intercessor (prayer warrior).
    - a. When he arrived in Jerusalem he was grieved to discover that the Jews, including some of the priests, had married heathen wives. (9:1-2)
      - (1) Ezra interceded with the **“LORD my God.”** (9:3-5)
      - (2) Ezra confessed God’s faithfulness. (9:6-9)
      - (3) Ezra confessed the people’s unfaithfulness. (9:10-15)
    - b. The response on the part of the people was immediate. (10:3, 10-12)
  - 4. Ezra was a preacher and teacher of the Word of God.
    - a. When the Temple was completed and the walls finished, the people gathered to hear the Word of the Lord. (Nehemiah 8:1-7)
    - b. As would be the task of any preacher, Ezra (1) **“read in the book in the law of God distinctly,”** and (2) **“gave the sense,”** and (3) **“caused them to understand the reading”** (Nehemiah 8:8).
- B. Nehemiah.
- 1. Nehemiah served as a **“cupbearer”** in the Persian court. (Nehemiah 1:11)
    - a. The **“cupbearer,”** or *“food taster,”* was a trusted servant who had frequent access to the king.
    - b. God had prepared Nehemiah by placing him in this unique position. (Romans 11:29)
  - 2. Nehemiah had heard from his brother that the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins and the gates were as left by the Babylonians. (1:2-4)
    - a. For four months, Nehemiah prayed and fasted about the situation. (cp. 1:1 with 2:1)
    - b. The king noticed his appearance and knew Nehemiah had a **“sorrow of heart.”** (2:2)
    - c. The king granted his request and commissioned him to do what God had placed in his heart. (2:6-9)
  - 3. Nehemiah was a good organizer.
    - a. When Nehemiah reached Jerusalem, he made a secret survey of the ruins and encouraged the people to the work. (2:13, 18)
    - b. He so successfully organized the people that, in spite of opposition, the work was finished in just 52 days. (6:15)
    - c. Two secrets to his successful building project was that **“the people had a mind to work”** (4:6), and a mind to **“prayer”** (4:9).
  - 4. After the Spiritual awakening, led by Ezra, the people made a covenant with Nehemiah to worship Jehovah. (9:36-38)

**Conclusion:** Several obvious lessons stand before us in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, including the fact that we need to be good students and teachers of the Word of God. We must also be ready to receive God’s directions and prayerfully get about doing what He is orchestrating. And finally, with humility, we must recognize that obstacles and foes will confront us on our journey, but always remember that **“with God all things are possible”** (Matthew 19:26).

## ZECHARIAH

**Text:** Zechariah 1:1

**Introduction:** Zechariah's ministry takes place following Israel's restoration from captivity. Approximately seventy-five years have elapsed since Jeremiah predicted the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army. With the conclusion of their captivity, God moved King Cyrus of Persia to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple.

- I. Zechariah's Background. (1:1)
  - A. The Hebrew name, "**Zechariah**," means "*Yahweh Remembers*," a popular name belonging to at least thirty-one individuals in the Old Testament alone.
    1. The name also appears in the New Testament in reference to John the Baptist's father. (Luke 1:5, 3:2)
    2. Zechariah, in effect, practically closes the Old Testament—it is next to the final book—while the Gospel of Luke, bridging the gap of 400 silent years, opens with Zacharias, John's father.
    3. John's father was married to Elizabeth, whose name means, "*God is my Oath*," calling attention that God not only remembers, but He remembers His oath.
    4. Unfolding in the Gospels, then, are things long before promised by God throughout the Old Testament regarding the coming "**BRANCH**" (3:8, 6:12), Jesus.
  - B. Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest.
    1. His father, Iddo, was also a prophet and a priest. (Nehemiah 12:4)
    2. This means that Zechariah was of the family of Aaron, the first high priest.
  - C. Zechariah was one of the three prophetic writers following the captivity.
    1. As a contemporary, Haggai was to arouse the people to the outward task of rebuilding the Temple. (Haggai 1:2-8)
    2. Zechariah sought to lead the people in an inward change of heart, so that their Temple worship would be proper.
    3. Nearly a century later, Malachi would rebuke God's backslidden people for their neglect in worshipping the Lord and call them to repentance. (Malachi 3:7)
- II. Zechariah's Plea. (1:2-6)
  - A. Recognize God's anger at sin. (1:2)
    1. The people's ancestors had rebelled against the LORD and, in turn, been judged.
    2. Prior to delivering his message of God's blessings, Zechariah reminded them of God's anger with their forefathers.
  - B. Return to the LORD in repentance. (1:3)
    1. The returned exiles were to obey the LORD's command to turn back to Him.
    2. The returned exiles were to trust the promise of God's presence. (Isaiah 4:2)
  - C. Reject the evil example of your forefathers. (1:4)
    1. The previous generations are cited for their negligence, inattentiveness, and disobedience.

2. To inherit the great promises of God, His people must learn from the mistakes of their past and not repeat them.
- D. Realize the time to repent is now. (1:5)
  1. Life is short and the opportunity to repent can be lost. (Proverbs 27:1)
  2. Though God had previously sent prophets, they too have passed off the scene.
- E. Remember God's faithfulness to His Word. (1:6)
  1. By focusing on repentance, God helped Zechariah prepare the people to receive His blessings and promises.
  2. One author writes, "*Biblical repentance is not just focused on behavioral patterns, but more importantly, more fundamentally on relational patterns: someone to love, not just some way to act . . .*"

### III. Zechariah's Visions. (1:7-6:15)

- A. Eight Visions
  1. The red-horsed rider: God's anger against the nations and blessings on restored Israel. (1:7-17)
  2. The four horns/craftsmen: God's judgment on the nations that afflict Israel. (1:18-21)
  3. The Surveyor: God's future blessing on restored Israel. (2:1-13)
  4. The cleansing of Joshua, the high priest: Israel's future cleansing from sin and reinstatement as a priestly nation. (3:1-10)
  5. The golden candlestick and olive trees: Israel presented as the light to the nations under Messiah, the King-Priest. (4:1-14)
  6. The flying scroll: The totality of divine judgment on individual Israelites. (5:1-4)
  7. The woman in the ephah: The removal of Israel's national sin of rebellion and idolatry against God. (5:5-11)
  8. The Four Chariots: Divine judgment on Gentile nations. (6:1-8)
- B. Summary: nations will be punished, Israel delivered, and Messiah crowned. (6:9-15)

### IV. Zechariah's Warnings. (7:1-8:23)

- A. Chapter 7 begins with a question posed to the Lord and His prophets. (7:1-3)
  1. A series of commemorative fasts had developed during the captivity, highlighting, specifically, the destruction of the Temple at the beginning of the captivity.
  2. With the reconstruction of the Temple, should these fasts be continued?
- B. Zechariah replies by urging God's people not to substitute empty formalism for the reality of the living presence of the Lord of glory. (8:19)

### V. Zechariah's Burdens. (9:1-14:21)

- A. Chapters 9-11, for the most part, addresses the First Coming of Jesus Christ (9:9), stressing the theme of His rejection, and outlining Israel's upcoming prophetic history.
- B. Chapters 12-14 then turns attention to the Second Coming of the Son of God with an emphasis on His enthronement (14:9) as the climax of Israel's history.

**Conclusion:** Zechariah's message is one that continues to bring comfort and encouragement to the people of God in light of the Lord's soon return. The Apostle John writes, "**And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure**" (I John 3:3).

## ESTHER

**Text:** Esther 2:5-7

**Introduction:** Esther is a crisis book. It is a drama – not of fiction, but of genuine fact. It is set on the stage of real history, and gathers round it actual personages. Five figures move before us: Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch; Vashti, the deposed queen; Haman, the Jew-hater; Mordecai, the Jewish leader; and Esther, the Jewish girl who becomes queen. In the background are the royal palace, the Persian capital, and several million Jews.

- I. Esther – A Drama Of Providence.
  - A. Purpose: A demonstration of the providential care of God over His people.
    1. In Esther, we see “*providential preservation*” as distinct from what we call “*miraculous.*”
    2. In Esther, we see “*providential overruling*” as distinct from “*supernatural intervening.*”
    3. In Esther, no miraculous intervention is resorted to, such as parting a sea.
  - B. Esther is the only Book in the Bible that does not mention God specifically.
    1. If God had been specifically mentioned in the story the dramatic force and moral impact of the story would have been reduced.
    2. We are meant to see, in the natural outworking of events, how, without violating human free will, and without interrupting the ordinary ongoing of human affairs, God unsuspectedly, but infallibly, controls all things.
  - C. King Ahasuerus is known in history outside the Bible as Xerxes, who reigned over the Persian empire from 485 to 465 B.C.
    1. This king ordered a certain bridge built, who, in learning that the bridge had been destroyed by a storm just after its completion, commanded three hundred lashes inflicted on the sea, and then had the unhappy builders of the bridge beheaded.
    2. So depraved was his sensuality that he offered a prize for the invention of some new indulgence.
    3. It is just like Ahasuerus to dethrone Queen Vashti for refusing to expose herself before his drunken guests.
    4. It is just like Ahasuerus to consign a people like the Jews to be massacred, and then to swing over to the opposite extreme of sanctioning Jewish vengeance on thousands of his other subjects.
- II. Esther – Two Main Movements.
  - A. Crisis Anticipated.
    1. Queen Vashti deposed. (Chapter 1)
      - a. Vashti was ordered by Ahasuerus to show her beauty to a host of drunken men at a feast, but the queen refused. (1:10-12)
      - b. It comes as no surprise that when the king’s high council considered the matter, they concluded that Vashti must forfeit her royal position. (1:19)

2. Esther becomes queen. (Chapter 2)
    - a. When Ahasuerus sobered up he realized what had taken place. (2:1)
    - b. With the position of queen open, a decree was sent out to find all the fair young virgins, from which the king would select a new queen. (2:3-4)
    - c. After a year, Esther was taken before the king and made queen. (2:16-17)
  3. Haman plots massacre. (Chapter 3)
    - a. In time, Haman was promoted above all the servants of the king. (3:1-2)
    - b. When Mordecai refused to bow to the Amalekite, Haman, he became mad and made plans to kill all the Jews scattered throughout the empire. (3:5-6)
    - c. He approached the king with a bribe for his consent. (3:8-9)
  4. Mordecai pleads help. (Chapter 4)
    - a. Having heard the decree, Mordecai sends word to Esther to go to the king and make a request on behalf of her people. (4:1-8)
    - b. At this point, the implicit recognition of God is unmistakable. (4:13-14)
    - c. Esther chooses to courageously appeal to the king. (4:15-16)
  5. Esther devises and carries out her plan. (Chapter 5)
    - a. Three days later, Esther, dressed in royal apparel, entered into the inner court of the king's palace. (5:1-2)
    - b. Esther made her request that the king and Haman attend a banquet that day and return for a second banquet on the next day. (5:4-8)
    - c. After departing the first banquet, Haman and his wife prepare a gallows, seventy-five feet high, to hang Mordecai the next day. (5:14)
- B. Crisis Overruled.
1. Mordecai is honored. (Chapter 6)
    - a. Instead of being hung the next day, the king choose to honor Mordecai for having saved his life on an earlier occasion. (6:1-3, cp. 2:21-23)
    - b. When Haman approaches the king with his request for the life of Mordecai, the king asks him to honor the man who had done him good. (6:3-11)
  2. Esther is bold. (Chapter 7)
    - a. The future of the Jewish people depended on her.
    - b. At her banquet, she made her request to the king to save her people. (7:3-6)
    - c. Haman was sentenced to die on the gallows made for Mordecai. (7:10)
  3. The Jews are avenged, **"Purim"** is instituted and Mordecai is promoted. (Chapters 8-10)
    - a. Note the Lord's hand in all this. (Proverbs 21:1)
    - b. The providential care of God is evident throughout the Book of Esther.

### III. Lessons From Esther.

- A. Esther obeyed Mordecai as she would have her own father. (Ephesians 6:2)
- B. Esther was not ashamed of her heritage. (Romans 1:16)
- C. Esther possessed courage, even in the face of death. (Joshua 1:9)
- D. Esther was used by God, within the scope of His providence, to work out His purposes for His people. (Romans 8:28)

**Conclusion:** With the account of Esther, Old Testament history comes to a close, yet God remains faithful to His covenant people.

## JOB

**Text:** Job 1:1-5

**Introduction:** The Book of Job is probably the oldest book of the Bible, preceding the life of Jesus Christ by at least 1,500 years, possibly even at least 2,000 years. The subject matter of this book is of great importance for our spiritual lives. One Bible teacher has summarized the message of the Book of Job with the following question: *“Can I serve God simply for who He is and not for what I get from Him for myself?”*

We cannot fail to see in the study of Job that there is always a divine purpose in the believer’s suffering. God never allows us to suffer needlessly.

### I. Job’s Description. (1:1)

#### A. **“Perfect.”**

1. This word does not mean *“sinless perfection,”* for only the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, incarnate in the flesh, can claim perfection. (I Peter 2:22)
2. The Hebrew word for **“perfect”** means *“whole”* or *“complete.”*
  - a. The same Hebrew word is translated **“undefiled”** in Song of Solomon 5:2.
  - b. The word carries the thought of being *“morally innocent”* or *“having integrity.”*
3. Job was perfect in that he had wholeheartedly given himself over to pleasing God.

#### B. **“Upright.”**

1. This word is often used to describe a straight road or even path.
2. Job exhibited a strict regard for all that was morally right.
  - a. Ezekiel 14:14 speaks of Job’s righteousness on the same level as that of Noah’s and Daniel’s.
  - b. James 5:11 speaks of him as a man of great patience.
3. These passages not only refer to the character of the man, but they also establish his historicity.

#### C. **“Feared God.”**

1. In the Old Testament, **“fear”** means *“a reverential trust in God coupled with a hatred for evil.”*
2. Fear, in the sense of dread, views the one feared as an enemy; fear, in the sense of respect, considers him a friend.
3. With God as his Friend, Job grew in his sensitivity to sin and hatred for it. (Proverbs 9:10, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”**)

#### D. **“Eschewed evil.”**

1. He shunned evil, and turned aside from it,
2. His outward walk corresponded with his relationship with God.
3. Before God, he was a man of deep moral and spiritual character and, therefore, God said of him, **“There is none like him”** (1:8).

## II. Job's Family Life.

- A. He was a man of considerable wealth. (1:2-3)
  - 1. It is also evident from the Book that Job was a man of considerable culture.
  - 2. He was respected by those around him.
  - 3. He was well versed in history, astronomy and science in general.
- B. Job was a man greatly concerned for his family, and their spiritual well-being. (1:4-5)
  - 1. Though there is no mention of the Law, yet Job knew about making sacrifices.
  - 2. He was a faithful prophet and priest to his family.
  - 3. He knew the value of intercession and met his responsibility in that area.

## III. Job's Need.

- A. In recognizing all of these things we still must come back to the fact that Job was not sinlessly perfect.
  - 1. His natural self was tainted, as is ours.
  - 2. He belonged to the family of Gad; he was earnest in his devotion to God; and he was upright in his demeanor, yet he did not know the depth of his own depravity.
  - 3. He did not know the truth that Paul later expressed in Romans 7:18, "**For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing . . .**"
- B. Job's knowledge of himself needed to be brought into line with God's knowledge of himself. (29:2-17)
  - 1. Job needed to see deep into his own heart.
  - 2. The testings of his life would do a refining work that would bring him to a new knowledge of himself, and of God.
  - 3. To know God, in all of His holiness and perfection, was something greatly needed in Job's life, and something greatly needed today. (Philippians 3:10)
- C. Perhaps we have passed through similar circumstances as Job, and have asked ourselves just why is God punishing us.
  - 1. Job had to find out how hollow and fickle this world is.
    - a. As long as he had plenty, the world was his friend; when he was stripped of his possessions, all he had left was God.
    - b. As long as the prodigal had money to spend, he had friends, but when his money was all gone, so were his friends. (Luke 15:11-17ff)
      - (1) It is right here that the Scripture adds, "**And when he came to himself,**" literally meaning, "*when he came to the end of himself.*"
      - (2) This is what the prodigal needed to do; this is what Job needed to do; and this is what we need to do.
  - 2. When Job came into the presence of the Lord, the egotism revealed in chapter 29, and the bitterness expressed in chapter 30, all disappeared.

## IV. Job's Insight.

- A. Job realized that there was a benevolent purpose behind His suffering. (23:10)
- B. Life's bitterest experiences hold God's gracious purposes. (see I Peter 4:12-13)
- C. Job had his problems, but he never lost faith in God. (13:15a)

**Conclusion:** God not only brought Job through his trials, but He brought him to a place that he would have never enjoyed except by means of his trials. (42:12a)

## MARY

**Text:** Luke 1:26-27

**Introduction:** All the authentic material we have about Mary comes from the Scriptures. She was of the tribe of Judah and the line of David. Matthew's genealogy of Joseph records, **"And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ"** (1:16). Note that it does not say that Joseph begat Jesus.

In Luke 3, the genealogy of Mary is traced back to Adam. Verse 23 reads, **"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli."** Luke records that Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, the father of Mary.

Knowing little of her home life or background, the only thing we know with and certainty is that she lived in Nazareth.

- I. Mary's Virginity. **"A Virgin Shall Conceive."** (Isaiah 7:14)
  - A. Mary was a virgin. (Luke 1:26-27)
    1. Gabriel was sent from God to a **"virgin"** engaged to a man named Joseph.
    2. Matthew confirms this same fact. (Matthew 1:18, 23-25)
    3. According to Luke 1:34, Mary had known no man.
  - B. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity.
    1. James Orr writes, *"It is well known that the last half century has been marked by a determined assault upon the truth of the virgin birth of Christ. . . . The attack is not confined, indeed, to the article of the virgin birth. It affects the whole supernatural estimate of Christ – His life, His claims, His sinlessness, His miracles, [and] His resurrection from the dead."*
    2. Historical defense for the virgin birth:
      - a. Ignatius (35-107 A.D.), an early church father, discipled personally by the apostle John, wrote, *"For our God Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary . . . by the Holy Ghost."*
      - b. Aristides (125 A.D.) shared, *"He is Himself Son of God on high, Who was manifested of the Holy Spirit, come down from heaven, and being born of a Hebrew virgin, took on His flesh from a virgin."*
      - c. Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) said, *"Our teacher Jesus Christ, Who is the first-begotten of God the Father, was not born as a result of sexual relations . . . the power of God descending upon the virgin overshadowed her and caused her, while still a virgin, to conceive . . ."*
    3. Again, Orr wrote, *"Doctrinally, the belief in the virgin birth of Christ is of the highest value for the right apprehension of Christ's unique and sinless personality. Here is one, as Paul brings out in Romans 5:12ff., Who, free from sin Himself, and not involved in the Adamic liabilities of the race, reverses the curse of sin and death brought in by the first Adam, and establishes the reign of righteousness and life. Had Christ been naturally born, not one of these things could be affirmed of Him."*

- II. The Announcement To Mary. (Luke 1:32-33)
- A. Five things about Mary's Son:
1. **"He shall be great."**
  2. **"He . . . shall be called the Son of the Highest."**
    - a. This points to His equality with Yahweh.
    - b. In Semitic thought, a son was a "*carbon copy*" of his father, and the phrase **"son of"** was used in reference to one who possessed his father's qualities.
  3. **"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."**
    - Jesus, as David's descendant, will assume the throne of David when He reigns in the Millennium.
  4. **"He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever."**
    - Jesus' reign over the nation if Israel will continue into the Eternal State.
  5. **"Of His kingdom there shall be no end."**
    - a. David understood that Yahweh had spoken of the distant future.
    - b. Mary would have understood that the angel was speaking to her of the Messiah Who had been promised long ago.
- B. Mary's humility and submission to such a miracle is found in Luke 1:38.
- III. Mary And Her Son.
- A. Mary's family. (Mark 6:3)
1. Some would teach a "*perpetual virginity*" of Mary, saying that her other children were cousins of Jesus.
  2. This is contrary to the clear statements of the Scripture. (Cp. Matthew 13:55-56)
- B. At the beginning of His public ministry, Mary appeared with Jesus at a wedding feast in Cana. (John 2:3-5)
1. She tried to direct His actions.
  2. Jesus gently responded with a respectful, but firm rebuke.
  3. From then on, Mary became subject unto Jesus as the Son of God.
- C. Mary suffered her deepest agony at the foot of the Cross. (John 19:25-27)
1. She had followed Him on that last journey to Jerusalem.
  2. She had witnessed the cruelty of His crucifixion.
  3. She had experienced the great sorrow predicted by Simeon. (Luke 2:34-35)
  4. She had to give Him over to the Father and let Him be the Messiah. (Isaiah 53:5)
  5. Of all His family, only Mary held fast to the Messiahship of her Son.
- D. The last mention of Mary was in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4, 14)
- IV. Mary's Example.
- A. We must believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, for the coming **"seed"** spoken of in Genesis 3:15 is that of a woman, not a man.
- B. In like manner, as Mary was submissive to the Holy Spirit, so ought we to be.
- C. We may not understand everything in reference to children, but it's a good practice to ponder their practices in our heart. (Luke 2:19)

**Conclusion:** As the first member of the human race to accept Christ, she stands as the first of the redeemed and as the flagship of humanity itself. She is our enduring example for faith, service to God, and a life of righteousness.

## JOSEPH

**Text:** Matthew 1:18-25

**Introduction:** It is interesting that two Josephs are associated with the life of Christ, one at His birth and the other at His burial. Following His death, it was Joseph of Arimathaea that helped take down the crucified body of the Lord and offered his own tomb as a place of burial (Matthew 27:57-60). The subject in this lesson concerns the first Joseph, **“the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ”** (Matthew 1:16.)

I. Joseph – Espousal Of Mary.

- A. To the Jewish people of the day, marriage was the culmination of a three step process:
1. Engagement – this step involved a contract often arranged by family members who determined whether or not the couple would be well suited for each other.
  2. Espousal/Betrothal.
    - a. This one year ratification allowed the couple to be known as belonging to each other, but not allowing them to live together as *“husband and wife.”*
    - b. For all practical purposes, this period was the equivalent of marriage.
    - c. The only way a betrothal could be terminated was by divorce.
  3. Marriage Proper.
    - a. This final step took place at the end of the year espousal.
    - b. The Bible Knowledge Commentary tells us that *“the husband would then go to the house of the bride’s parents and in a grand processional march lead his bride back to his home. There they would begin to live together as husband and wife and consummate their marriage physically.”*
- B. It was during their Betrothal Period that Mary made know to Joseph that she was with child by the miraculous act of God.
1. Confronted with the problem of his beloved being pregnant, he pondered how to end the relationship privately, rather than expose her publicly.
  2. It was during this time of careful contemplation that the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph with a message from God.

II. Joseph – Used Of God.

- A. When Augustus decreed **“that all the world should be taxed,”** Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem, and it was there that Jesus was born. (Luke 2:1-7, cp. Micah 5:2)
- B. Joseph was with Mary when the shepherds came to do their homage. (Luke 2:8-20)
- C. He was present for the presentation of Jesus in the Temple according to the Law, hearing the testimonies of both Simeon and Anna. (Luke 2:22-38)
- D. He was on hand for the visit of the Magi. (Matthew 2:10-11)
- E. Being warned by the Lord that Herod was plotting to murder the Child, he fled with his family into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-18)
- F. After the death of Herod, they returned to Nazareth. (Matthew 2:19-23)
- G. Every year, at Passover, he and Mary attended the Passover Feast in Jerusalem, and when Jesus was 12, He too went with them. (Luke 2:41-51)

- H. A a carpenter, Joseph undoubtedly taught Jesus the trade, and how to use a hammer and nails. (Mark 6:3, cp. Matthew 16:18 & I Corinthians 3:11)
- I. Uncertainty remains as to what happened to Joseph, though speculative thoughts have arisen. (Cp. John 3:30)

### III. Joseph – A Man Of Character. (Matthew 1:19-25)

- A. A man of justice. (1:19a)
- B. A man of discretion. (1:19b)
- C. A man of piety. (1:20)
- D. A man of obedience. (1:24)
- E. A man of self-discipline. (1:25)

### IV. Joseph – His Contemplation.

- A. The birth of Jesus was different from that of any other Jewish boy.
  - 1. Jesus was born of an earthly mother, without the need of an earthly father.
  - 2. The Scriptures make it very clear about the virgin birth of Christ, speaking of her pregnancy **“before they came together”** (Matthew 1:18).
  - 3. In God’s own infinite wisdom it was necessary for Him to enter into this world through an earthly mother, but not by an earthly father. (Isaiah 9:6)
- B. Joseph’s love for Mary was demonstrated by his actions.
  - 1. Being a **“just man,”** he was literally torn between obeying the Law (by exposing Mary to the authorities) and his love for her.
  - 2. He faced two options.
    - a. The penalty for her condition under the Law could have been as severe as death by stoning. (Deuteronomy 22:23-27)
    - b. A second option would have been for Joseph to put her away **“privily,”** meaning, by divorce.
- C. It was at that moment that the **“Angel of the Lord”** appeared to him.
  - 1. The angel told Joseph that all this was in keeping with God’s eternal plan. (Cp. Isaiah 7:14)
    - a. How and Why did Joseph understand the words of the angel?
    - b. Joseph knew what had been said in the Old Testament.
    - c. When the angel pointed out Isaiah’s prophecy, it was easy to accept.
  - 2. He violated the one-year waiting period by taking Mary into his home.
    - a. Though there might be misunderstandings in the community and much gossip at the well, Joseph knew the true story of Mary’s pregnancy and God’s will for his life.
    - b. Obedient to the last detail, by calling the Child **“Jesus”** (Matthew 1:25), Joseph evidenced the reality of his own faith.

**Conclusion:** With the birth of Jesus, Joseph faced the predicament of his life. In his mind, Mary had committed the greatest of sins – adultery. Yet, his love for her was far greater than any sin she could commit. I Peter 4:8 is a reminder that, **“[love] shall cover the multitude of sins.”** In his desperation, Joseph got alone with God and received improbable words of comfort and hope. The message to him became a call to action, not judgment. God was in the midst of doing something, and Joseph was to fulfill a unique role.

## JOHN (THE BAPTIZER)

**Text:** Luke 1:57-60

**Introduction:** Herbert Lockyer writes, *“With the appearance of John the Baptist we have the burial of the Old Dispensation and the emergence of the New. We seem to see his rugged figure standing with arms outstretched, as with one hand he takes the Old Testament, and with the other holds the New, and who, through his ministry, makes the transition from Law to Grace. He was the foreclosure of the old and the forerunner of the new.”*

- I. His Early Life.
  - A. John was born to Zacharias and Elisabeth, both being descendants of Aaron. (Luke 1:5)
    1. John the Baptist was born into a godly home and nurtured in an atmosphere of love for the Lord. (Luke 1:6)
    2. John’s mother, Elisabeth, was a cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus. (Luke 1:36)
    3. Zacharias and Elisabeth lived in the hill country of Judea. (Luke 1:39-40)
  - B. The angel Gabriel divinely announced the coming birth of John to Zacharias as he was performing his priestly duties in the Temple. (Luke 1:8-17)
    1. Zacharias initially doubted the messenger, questioning, **“Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years”** (Luke 1:18).
    2. Because of his doubt, Zacharias was stricken dumb and did not speak again until John was born and named. (Luke 1:19-20, 57-64)
    3. The fact that John was born just as God had said is evidence of God’s glorious power – **“For with God nothing shall be impossible”** (Luke 1:37).
  - C. Even while still in his mother’s womb, John recognized the presence of the Son of God when Mary arrived at her home for a visit. (Luke 1:41-42)
- II. His Prophesied Greatness. (Luke 1:14-17)
  - A. He would cause his parents to rejoice.
  - B. He would cause others to rejoice because of his contribution to society.
  - C. He would be **“great in the sight of the Lord.”**
  - D. He would live a disciplined life, abstaining from **“wine”** and **“strong drink.”**
  - E. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his very beginning.
  - F. He would cause many to return to God.
  - G. He would restore broken families.
  - H. He would **“make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**
- III. His Character.
  - A. His Self-Denial. (Matthew 3:3-4)
  - B. His Courage. (Matthew 3:7)
  - C. His Preparatory Work. (Matthew 11:10)
  - D. His Honor. (Matthew 11:11)
  - E. His Powerful Preaching. (Mark 1:4-5)

- F. His Humility. (Mark 1:7)
- G. His Holiness. (Mark 6:20)
- H. His Testimony. (John 1:29-36)
- I. His Burning Zeal. (John 5:35)
- J. His Witness. (John 10:41)

#### IV. His Ministry.

- A. John's preaching. (Matthew 3:2)
  - 1. His was the first authentic prophet to appear in about four hundred years.
  - 2. He identified himself with a call to repentance.
  - 3. He announced Jesus as the manifestation of God in the flesh. (John 1:6-8, 15-18)
- B. John's baptism of Jesus. (Matthew 3:13-17)
  - 1. In an unrecorded encounter, John had been told of a sign which would distinguish Jesus as the Messiah. (John 1:32-34)
  - 2. Upon recognizing Jesus, John declared, "**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29).
    - a. To the devout Jew, the term, "**Lamb of God,**" would bring to mind the entire sacrificial system.
    - b. Jesus, as "**The Lamb of God,**" would settle the issues of sin's forgiveness and the atonement once and for all. (Hebrews 9:28a)
  - 3. All of the Triune Godhead was present at Jesus' baptism. (Matthew 3:16-17)
    - a. God, the Son (Jesus), was present in the water.
    - b. God, the Holy Spirit, descended like a dove.
    - c. God, the Father, spoke from heaven.
- C. John's death. (Mark 6:14-28)
  - 1. Vindictiveness caused John's death.
    - a. King Herod had taken his brother Philip's wife, and John rebuked him for it.
    - b. "**When a convenient day**" came, Herodias persuaded her daughter, who had pleased Herod with a sensual dance, to ask for John the Baptist's head.
    - c. Herod granted the request.
  - 2. Notice John's doubt while in prison. (Matthew 11:1-6)
    - a. Even the saints of the Scriptures were mere men and on occasion had doubts likened unto our own.
    - b. Jesus could have simply answered the question, "Yes," but instead followed the adage, "*Actions speak louder than words!*"
  - 3. Jesus, Himself, gave supreme tribute to John. (Matthew 11:7-11)

#### V. His Lessons For Us.

- A. Though rough in many ways, John had convictions that demanded a response.
- B. The greatness of John was in his message; He prepared people to meet Jesus.
- C. His greatest sermon might be found John 3:30, "**He must increase, but I must decrease.**"

**Conclusion:** When one remembers that John's public ministry was confined to less than one year, the extraordinary influence of the man can be realized. His ministry touched every part of society, from king to peasant. Never had a prophet had such influence as John.

## NICODEMUS

**Text:** John 3:1

**Introduction:** Nicodemus represents the best of the best in the nation of Israel. As **“a ruler of the Jews,”** he was a teacher, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. The Sanhedrin was responsible for religious decisions and also, under the Romans, for civil rule. When the Sanhedrin put Jesus on trial, Nicodemus rebuked the Pharisees for condemning Him without a proper hearing, and later helped with the burial of the Lord.

- I. Nicodemus – The Man Who Came By Night.
  - A. Whenever Nicodemus is mentioned, it is always with a label along this line: **“the same that came to Jesus by night.”**
    1. Why is this *“Master in Israel”* always spoken of in this way?
      - a. Because of fear?
      - b. Because he wanted an uninterrupted conversation without the distractions of the ever-present crowds?
      - c. Because he had such a heart hunger that he could not wait until morning?
    2. John does not tell us why, yet, throughout his Gospel, the night-time carries with it a sinister tone. (John 9:4, 11:10, 13:30)
  - B. Outside the events surrounding the birth of Christ, there had been no direct voice from God for a long time.
    1. Here, finally, is One whose message carried the stamp of divine authority.
    2. Nicodemus, the cautious enquirer, but a man of spiritual perception (John 3:2), sought out a conversation with Christ.
- II. Nicodemus – Spoken Of On Three Occasions.
  - A. He Came To Christ. (John 3:1-2)
    1. He approached Jesus **“by night.”**
    2. He came on behalf of the religionists, using the word **“we.”**
      - a. Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah and performed many spectacular works that were prophesied of the Messiah, therefore, *“Was Jesus the Messiah?”*
      - b. Some did eventually become believers. (Luke 13:31, Acts 6:7, 15:5)
    3. He acknowledged Jesus only as **“a teacher come from God.”**
      - a. Nicodemus was in the early stages of recognizing Who Jesus was/is.
      - b. When he saw the miracles being performed, he knew that only a Man of God could do such things.
      - c. The woman at the well later went from recognizing Jesus as a Jew, to being greater than Jacob, then a prophet, before finally recognizing Him as the Messiah. (John 4:5-26)
    4. Notice that Jesus did not answer Nicodemus directly, but saw into his empty, searching heart.
      - a. Miracles and signs are not nearly as important as a change of heart.
      - b. Jesus went from the surface inquiry to the real need. (John 3:3, 7)

- B. He Spoke For Christ. (John 7:42-53)
1. Many do question the Lord's origin and continue in unbelief.
    - a. When they look at Jesus, they see a great man, but only a man.
    - b. They see and believe that He was flesh and blood, but stop there.
    - c. They do not believe Jesus is the Son of God – a great prophet, no doubt; but the Messiah, the very Son of God, *NO!*
  2. The rulers' response was fourfold.
    - a. They wanted to get rid of Jesus; opposing Him and wanting nothing more to do with Him.
    - b. They claimed Him to be a deceiver and the people were mistaken by following Him.
    - c. They rejected Him strongly, wrongly pointing to the absence of a Scripture to prove their case.
      - (1) Such an argument is one from silence.
      - (2) Jonah came from Beth-Hepher in Galilee. (II Kings 14:25)
      - (3) Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but raised in Nazareth of Galilee.
    - d. They, having left the issue unsettled, which as religious leaders was their responsibility to settle, went every man **“unto his own house.”**
  3. When the Sanhedrin denounced Jesus as a false prophet, Nicodemus counseled the court by saying, **“Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?”**
    - a. He charged them with breaking the very Law they professed to uphold, and suggesting that they hear Christ and observe His mighty works.
    - b. It should be noted that Nicodemus was not present on that fateful occasion when the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death. (Mark 14:55-64)
- C. He Honored Christ. (John 19:39-40)
1. The Cross infused Nicodemus with boldness.
    - a. After the death of Christ, Nicodemus rendered loving, though belated, service to Him.
    - b. He openly joined Joseph of Armathaea in preparing Christ's body for a Kingly burial.
  2. At some point, Nicodemus came to know that Jesus was the Messiah.
    - a. Though he had failed to love Him in His life, Nicodemus would not fail Him in His death.
    - b. Broken in his heart over his Lord's death, he stepped forward now in faith and love to do what he could.

III. Nicodemus – The Hearing Of His Divine Need. (John 3:1-15)

- A. The Source of the *“New Birth”* – the Holy Spirit.
- B. The Importance of the *“New Birth”* – without it one **“cannot see/enter into the kingdom of God.”**
- C. The Nature of the *“New Birth”* – spiritual.
- D. The Necessity of the *“New Birth”* – **“YE MUST be born again.”**
- E. The Means of the *“New Birth.”* (John 1:11-12)

**Conclusion:** As with Nicodemus, so it is true with every person: **“Ye must be born again.”**

## ANDREW

**Text:** John 1:35-42

**Introduction:** Few will disagree that Peter is the disciple who stands out in the Gospels and the early portions of the Book of Acts. He was the great evangelist, the great public soul-winner of the early Church and every time he preached, multitudes were born again. But there was another evangelist in Peter's family – his brother Andrew, a man-behind-the-scenes. Andrew is mentioned only three times in the Bible, but each time he is found introducing men to Christ. No fanfare, no public notice, just a consistent witness that resulted in people being brought to the Lord.

- I. Andrew's Background.
  - A. Although references to Andrew in the gospels are few, what is recorded reveals him as a humble, unassuming, devoted and consistent disciple of Christ.
  - B. As a simple businessman, he and his brother Peter operated a small fishing boat out of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 4:18, cp, John 1:44)
  - C. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before he came to Christ. (John 1:35-40)
  - D. When he was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, he went at once to his brother Simon and said, **“We have found the [Messiah].”** (John 1:41)
  
- II. Andrew's Optimism. (John 6:1-15)
  - A. Being late in the day, the disciples were discussing the problem of the tired and hungry multitude when Andrew appeared.
    1. In contrast to Philip's response, Andrew brought with him a little boy who had in his hands **“five barley loaves, and two small fishes.”**
    2. He presented the boy and his lunch to Jesus.
    3. Jesus took the lunch, blessed it and divided it among the people.
  - B. It is significant that the boy was willing to share his food, but it is more significant presently that it was Andrew who brought him to Jesus.
    1. He alone among the disciples was sensitive to the possibilities hidden deep within the boy and concealed in his lunch box.
    2. He demonstrated his utmost confidence in Jesus' ability to use what the boy had to feed the multitude.
  
- III. Andrew's Evangelism.
  - A. Each time Andrew is mentioned in the New Testament he is introducing someone to Jesus.
    1. His brother Simon. (John 1:41)
      - a. The most difficult place to begin witnessing is among one's immediate family.
      - b. Andrew's missionary cause began where it ought – in the home. (Acts 1:8)
      - c. Whereas Peter became the *“spiritual father”* of 3,000 at Pentecost, Andrew became the *“spiritual grand-father”* of 3,000 at Pentecost.

2. The little boy. (John 6:8-9)
    - a. Hundreds of people that day had overlooked the presence of the children.
    - b. When the opportunity presented itself, Andrew took advantage of the occasion to introduce the child to Jesus. (cp. Luke 18:16-17)
  3. Total strangers. (John 12:20-22)
    - a. A certain group of Greeks had come to Jerusalem with their Jewish friends for the Feast of the Passover.
    - b. They first made a request to Philip, who was unsure of the Gentiles place in the Kingdom, so he turned the matter over to Andrew who took them to Jesus.
    - c. Andrew would not keep any man from seeing his Lord simply because he was "*different.*" (Cp. I Corinthians 12:13)
- B. Andrew was absorbed in the task of sharing his treasure with others. (Psalm 107:2)

#### IV. Andrew's Lessons.

- A. The first grace Andrew manifested was that of humility.
  1. Peter, Andrew's esteemed brother in the flesh, and yet his spiritual son in Christ, would later write about being "**clothed with humility**" (I Peter 5:5b), but Andrew was always seen wearing such a garment.
  2. He is an example of a man who thought more of service than of reputation, more of the work to be done than of the place given to the worker.
  3. Herbert Lockyer: "*There are far too many who will not play in the band unless they can have the big drum; who will not work unless given a prominent position.*"
- B. From Andrew we learn of the divine observance of the obscure. (Matthew 19:28-30)
  1. Although Andrew was the first disciple, he never reached the first place of prominence.
  2. He was not destined to play a conspicuous part in the Gospel drama.
  3. Peter, James and John are referred to as "*pillars of the church*" (Galatians 2:9), but Andrew was one of its humbler stones.
- C. He will ever remain a model disciple in showing us that we are saved to save others.
  1. The greatest service we can render to those around us is to confess with Andrew, "**[I] have found the . . . Christ**" (John 1:41).
  2. Andrew shows us the way we ought to go, and how to serve the Lord to the extent of our limited ability.

#### V. Andrew's Martyrdom.

- A. Tradition tells us that Andrew traveled far and wide as an itinerant preacher visiting such lands as Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, and even Russia.
- B. In Greece, A.D. 69, Maximillia, wife of the local proconsul, was converted to Christ under Andrew's ministry.
- C. This angered the proconsul and led him to order Andrew beaten and then crucified on a cross shaped like an X, which from that day has been called "*St. Andrew's Cross.*"

**CONCLUSION:** No one can know what one ordinary life dedicated to God can do to bless the world. As Peter publicly ministered, Andrew quietly shared with individuals. In his humility, and out of the depth of his experience with Jesus Christ, Andrew was content to share his Lord unnoticed by the crowds.

## PETER

**Text:** Matthew 4:18-20

**Introduction:** Jesus saw in Peter a man of ambition, which if given proper objectives would carry him far. Peter had his faults, for he was intensely human, but failures and triumphs were but stepping stones by which he reached new heights. This is why the fascinating story of Peter is so encouraging for others who seek to climb the upward way from their dead selves to better things.

### I. Peter's Background.

- A. Peter's given name was "**Simon,**" meaning, "*God has heard.*" (Luke 5:8)
  - 1. Jesus renamed him "**Cephas,**" meaning, "**a stone**" (John 1:42).
  - 2. His father's name was "**Jona.**" (John 1:42)
  - 3. Peter, and his brother Andrew, were fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, and perhaps in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee. (Luke 5:10)
  - 4. Peter was married (Matthew 8:14-15), and later took his wife on his missionary travels. (I Corinthians 9:5)
- B. Peter and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist before they met Jesus. (John 1:35-42)
  - 1. Peter was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. (John 1:41)
  - 2. In the midst of his labor as a fisherman, Peter received a call from Jesus that changed his life. (Luke 5:8-10)
- C. Peter was the human instrument used of God to pen two Epistles.

### II. Peter's Call. (John 1:42)

- A. The declaration with which Jesus greeted Peter was both a revelation and a prophecy: "**Thou art . . .**" and "**Thou shalt be . . .**"
  - 1. Here was an insight penetrating to the deepest recesses of Simon Peter's nature.
  - 2. It was God's love that bore with Peter's limitations as he emerged from his old life. (cp. II Corinthians 5:17)
- B. The possibilities under the surface of Peter's nature were read by Christ with prophetic insight into a forecast of his true character.
  - 1. Grace pardoned his failures, and he became an apostle to leave the impact of utter devotion to Christ upon succeeding ages.
  - 2. God is never content to leave us where we are, but sees us for what we can become. (I Corinthians 1:26-28)

### III. Peter's Molding. (Matthew 4:18-20)

- A. As the Divine Potter, Jesus undertook molding Peter for the task of evangelism.
  - 1. The emphasis in the command is on, "**I will make you . . .**"
    - a. In the process of developing the characters of those He had chosen, it seemed as if He had poor material with which to work, but He succeeded. (Romans 8:29)

- b. Under His training, Jesus saw that Peter could become a workman who had no need to be ashamed. (II Timothy 2:15)
- B. Peter, at the time of his calling, along with the rest of the fishermen of Galilee, had much to learn, and unlearn, before the high requirements of Christ were satisfied.

#### IV. Peter's Example.

- A. Lesson of vision. (Matthew 16:13-20)
  - 1. The twelve had been with Christ for more than a year now and had studied His life and felt the impact of it on their own lives.
    - a. Our Lord asked the disciples how the people at large regarded Him.
    - b. With His eyes fastened on Peter, He asked, **“And whom say ye that I am?”**
  - 2. Peter had reached the mountain peak of revelation, and received the benediction of the One revealed to his mind.
  - 3. Peter's confession, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,”** became the foundation upon which Christ would build His Church – not upon Peter, but on what He confessed.
- B. Lesson of restraint. (Matthew 16:21-23)
  - 1. Regardless of consequences, Peter was frank, outspoken and generous with his impulses, even when mistaken.
  - 2. Peter had to learn that the cause of Christ could not be advanced by the weapons of worldly warfare. (Isaiah 55:8-9, II Corinthians 10:3-4)
- C. Lesson of grace. (Matthew 18:21-22)
  - 1. It would have been a poor outlook for Peter had there been any natural or numerical limit to forgiveness.
  - 2. Sinning Simon needed the grace that never wearies of forgiving, and will forever remain a monument of the patient and pardoning love of Christ.
- D. Lesson of humility. (Matthew 26:33-34)
  - 1. Confidence in *“self”* turned Peter into an idle boaster and led him to throw caution to the winds.
  - 2. Along a hard road of experience, Peter learned that **“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble”** (I Peter 5:5).
- E. Lesson of love. (John 21:15-18)
  - 1. At the Sea of Galilee, the risen Christ met with His disciples and renewed their call to service, and in a private confrontation dealt with Peter's failures.
  - 2. Satisfied with His disciple's outburst of passionate, burning love, Jesus re-commissioned Peter for future service.

#### V. Peter's Martyrdom. (John 21:18-19)

- A. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified in Rome upside down, stating that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same form and manner as his Lord.
- B. Little is known of Peter's other activities in Rome, although one author, writing about A.D. 125, stated that Peter's preaching inspired the writing of the first gospel, drafted by Mark, who was Peter's interpreter in Rome.

**Conclusion:** As followers of Christ, Peter reminds us so much of our own failings, and instinctively feel that what Christ accomplished in him, He can do in us. If He could make something of this imperfect mortal, surely there is hope for all of us.

## JAMES (SON OF ZEBEDEE)

**Text:** Matthew 4:18-22

**Introduction:** Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus solemnly told the Twelve, “**Ye shall drink indeed of my cup**” (Matthew 20:23). His pronouncement was in reference to the bitter cup of persecution, suffering and death. The first of the disciples to drink of that cup was James, the son of Zebedee. James paid the ultimate price of true discipleship: he gave his life for the One Whose blood purchased eternal life for him. But James was not the only disciple to drink of the cup. In fact, of the eleven faithful ones, only John, his brother, lived to a good old age. All of the others died as martyrs following James’ example.

### I. His Background.

- A. James was the son of Zebedee and Salome, who lived on the shores of Galilee.
  1. His father’s name, Zebedee, appears only in the gospel narratives on the occasion of his sons leaving him to follow Jesus.
    - a. Either he died shortly after they began their discipleship, or, as an orthodox Jew, he did not share their faith in Jesus, nor approved of their discipleship.
    - b. One may wonder whether Jesus had Zebedee in mind when He spoke about forsaking father and mother for His sake. (Matthew 10:37, 19:29)
  2. Zebedee was a fisherman on the Lake of Galilee and evidently a man of good social and economic position as he had hired servants to assist him in the management of his fishing business. (Mark 1:20)
    - a. Jona of Bethsaida, and his two sons, Andrew and Peter, were also fishermen of Galilee, and some sort of partnership seems to have existed between Jona and Zebedee in their fishing operations. (Luke 5:10)
    - b. Since it was a Jewish custom that sons should follow the trade of their father, James and John followed their father as fishermen.
    - c. James and John were among those to whom Jesus showed Himself again unto after His resurrection as they determined to go back to their fishing. (John 21:1-3)
  3. His mother’s name was Mary, surnamed Salome. (Matthew 27:56)
    - a. She believed thoroughly in Christ’s coming Kingdom. (Matthew 20:20-21)
    - b. She attended the crucifixion of the Lord. (Mark 15:39-40)
    - c. She was one who went to the tomb on the third day to anoint Jesus’ body with spices and discovered that Jesus was no longer dead. (Mark 16:1-8)
- B. James, along with his brother John, were surnamed by our Lord as “**Boanerges,**” meaning, “**The Sons of Thunder.**” (Mark 3:17)
  1. Some writers believe that James and John were men of fiery eloquence, thundering forth the Word of Truth.
  2. Others insist that the phrase is an expression of their fiery temperaments, showing itself in an all-consuming zeal.
  3. In either case, Jesus harnessed the natural disposition of James and made him a driving force in His kingdom.

- II. His Position – A Member Of The Inner Circle, Along With Peter And John.
  - A. Accompanied Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-2)
  - B. Present when Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. (Mark 1:29-31)
  - C. Witnessed Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter from the dead. (Mark 5:35-37)
  - D. Asked Jesus privately about His Second Coming on the Mount of Olives. (Mark 13:3-4)
  - E. Was requested of our Lord to join Him as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Mark 14:32-33)
  
- III. His Journey.
  - A. Decisive. (Matthew 4:21-22)
    - 1. As James and his brother John were mending their nets, Jesus approached, looked them full in the face, and called them to become fishers of men.
    - 2. It was a simple call, nothing dramatic or spectacular.
      - a. Like the Israelites, who were suddenly confronted with Moses’ leadership, these two men stood at a major crossroad of life.
      - b. As with the Israelites, on one hand there was bondage with bread, on the other, freedom with uncertainty.
    - 3. Like their fore-bearers, they took the dare, forsook everything, and followed Him whom they felt was the Son of God.
  - B. Transformed. (Luke 9:51-55)
    - 1. In route to Jerusalem the apostolic party stopped at a Samaritan village in the hope of finding lodging for the night.
      - a. The Samaritans, because of their hatred and prejudice against the Jews, refused them this hospitality.
      - b. When the word of the denial reached James, he went up in smoke. (cp. 9:54)
      - c. As one of the **“sons of thunder,”** this may have been James reverting back to his old self.
    - 2. Jesus’ response led James to see how contrary to the will of God is the spirit of vengeance and violence.
      - a. He learned, as did the ancient prophet Elijah, that the fire from heaven and the sword of human hate will never bring in God’s Kingdom.
      - b. Only the power of love is adequate to change men’s ways. (Luke 10:27)
  - C. Ambitious. (Mark 10:35-39)
    - 1. James did not like the thought of being relegated to a lesser position in the Kingdom.
    - 2. As envy and jealousy began to take root in his heart, in unison with his mother and brother, James posed the question – that he and his brother might sit on either side of Jesus in His glory.
    - 3. It would be a while before James would prove himself willing to be baptized with the baptism of Christ, but he became the first apostle to drink of the cup of martyrdom. (Acts 12:1-2)

**CONCLUSION:** When James met the Man from Nazareth by the name of Jesus, his whole life was changed. His quick temper and selfish ambitions were transformed in such a fashion as to make him a living example of II Corinthians 5:17. He became a new creation in Christ Jesus.

**JOHN (SON OF ZEBEDEE)**

**Text:** Mark 1:16-20

**Introduction:** As with James, Jesus nicknamed John **“Boanerges”** (Mark 3:17). Translated from the Greek, this means *“the soon angry one.”* In other words, John was impulsive and overly-aggressive. He lacked self-control, but more seriously, he lacked genuine love. Then, a gradual change began to happen as John witnessed *“Love”* personified in Jesus Christ. For three years he learned about genuine love from the Son of God Himself. It would be John who would pen the famed words, **“For God so loved the world . . .”**

**I. John’s Background.**

- A. John, whose older brother was James, was the son of Zebedee and Salome. (Matthew 4:21)
  - 1. He would become one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, referring to himself as the one **“whom Jesus loved”** (John 13:23).
  - 2. As a son of Zebedee, who owned a fleet of boats and had hired servants to assist him in his fishing business. He came from a well-to-do family. (Mark 1:19-20)
  - 3. In all probability, he never knew poverty till he shared it with Jesus.
- B. A disciple of John the Baptist. (John 1:35, 40)
  - 1. To accomplish the will of God in the work of God, one must have adequate spiritual preparation in the Word of God. (cp. II Timothy 2:15)
  - 2. John’s contact with the Baptist resulted in a spiritual crisis.
    - a. As an earnest, thoughtful, and pious Jew, John eagerly anticipated the coming of the Messiah, and when the Baptist declared that he had been raised up to prepare the way for the long-promised One, he believed him.
    - b. As the Baptist identified Jesus as **“the Lamb of God”** who had come to take away the sin of the world, John left him to follow Jesus. (John 1:36-37)
    - c. From that hour the heart of John was captive, and the thought of Jesus as **“the Lamb of God”** never left him.
  - 3. John refers to the Lamb twenty-two times in the Book of Revelation, and exalts Him as the central theme around the eternal Throne. (Revelation 5:6, 8, 12-13)

**II. John’s Call And Commission.**

- A. A disciple of John the Baptist. (John 1:35, 40)
- B. Being the unnamed disciples in John 1:40, John attached himself to Christ after leaving the Baptist and became one of the first disciples to be called.
- C. Discipled under the Master. (Matthew 4:21-22)
- D. One of the first Apostles named. (Luke 6:13-14)
- E. Paul referred to John, along with Peter and James, as **“pillars”** of the Church. (Galatians 2:9)
- F. He served faithfully for over seventy years.

**III. John’s Herald Of Love.**

- A. Christ desires to find Himself loved by His own. (John 21:15a)
  - 1. Years later, John wrote, “**We love Him, because He first loved us**” (I John 4:19).
  - 2. Love, if it is to be effective, must be singular and personal.
    - a. Because Christ loved all and died for all, He loved and died for everyone. (John 15:13)
    - b. Paul writes about the “*general principle*” being translated into the “*particular reality.*” (Galatians 2:20)
- B. The substance of what John records about divine love:
  - 1. God loves all men. (John 3:16)
  - 2. Christ expected all men to love Him and God. (John 8:42)
  - 3. Christ loves individuals. (John 11:5, 36)
  - 4. Christ loves the disciples in general. (John 13:34)
  - 5. Christ loves the Father. (John 14:31)
  - 6. The Father loves His Son. (John 15:9)
  - 7. God is One in Love. (John 15:10)
  - 8. Christ taught that we should love one another. (John 15:12-13)
  - 9. The Father loved the disciples of Christ. (John 16:27)
- C. During His crucifixion, the Lord lovingly commended the earthly care of His mother, Mary, unto the beloved Apostle John. (John 19:26-27)

#### IV. John’s Penmanship.

- A. The Gospel According to John – Christ in His Deity. (John 20:31)
- B. The First Epistle of John – Walking in Fellowship. (I John 1:3)
- C. The Second Epistle of John – Walking in Love. (II John 6)
- D. The Third Epistle of John – Walking in Truth. (III John 4)
- E. The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Presenting the Lamb of God. (Revelation 1:19)

#### V. John’s Martyrdom.

- A. After the death of Mary (Jesus’ earthly mother), John traveled far and wide proclaiming the message of the Lamb of God.
- B. As an old man, John was arrested and ordered to Rome, where he survived being plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil.
  - 1. Many are tempted to ask why God sometimes allows His most faithful to reach the age when activity had passed, and only the “*dregs*” of life remain.
  - 2. In his old age, John proved that Christ’s “**strength is made perfect in [human] weakness**” (II Corinthians 12:9).
- C. John, at the age of ninety or so, was eventually banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he penned the Book of Revelation.
  - 1. Tradition tells us that after his exile, he returned to Ephesus, where he died some time after Trajan became emperor in A.D. 98.
  - 2. John was the only Apostle who escaped a violent death.

**CONCLUSION:** The Christ John knew was the One of experience – the One he had seen and heard and handled (I John 1:1). To the Apostle, He was a Friend, and Light and Love; and those who dwell in Him come to resemble Him. John’s life illustrates that the image of Jesus is most clearly seen and reflected by those who respond most to His love.

## PHILIP (APOSTLE)

**Text:** John 1:43-46

**Introduction:** Philip was a Jew with a Greek name. Historians suggest that he was probably given his name in honor of Philip the Tetrarch, a Greek king who had ruled the region where the disciple was born. Understandably, there had been a strong Greek influence on Philip's life, and this was to play an important part in God's will for his ministry. The life of Philip is a simple, yet significant, example of the way God directs His children into His will.

- I. A Native Of Bethsaida in Galilee. (John 1:44)
  - A. Philip was born in Bethsaida, a city which our Lord condemned because of their rejection of Him. (Matthew 11:21)
    1. It was from this city that Philip came to be a witness of the Lord.
    2. Faithful witnesses for Christ sometimes come from unlikely places.
  - B. The key to Philip's spiritual history is found in the announcement, "**Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter**" (John 1:44).
    1. The important part of John's sentence is not only that Philip was born in Bethsaida, but that it was also the city "**of Andrew and Peter.**"
    2. As expectant souls, Andrew and Peter looked for the hope of Israel, and through their example and influence, Philip caught the influence of holy expectancy.
    3. Can we say that our lives are a means of blessing to those who live under the same roof with us, or live on the same street, or in the same town as us?
- II. A Seeker Who Was Found. (John 1:43)
  - A. This first person we have a record of Jesus seeking became His disciple.
    1. "**Findeth**" implies a diligent and concentrated search.
    2. Jesus sought and found Philip, but it is evident that Philip was also seeking Jesus, for he said to Nathaniel, "**We have found Him**" (John 1:45).
  - B. This finding was not by accident or mere chance.
    1. Divine dealings leave no room for chance or luck. (Cp. John 4:4)
    2. It was inevitable that Jesus and Philip should meet, and it was through direct contact with Philip that he became a child of God.
  - C. Throughout the Bible there is a connection between "**seeking**" and "**finding.**"
    1. The one is regarded as the necessary sequence of the other.
      - a. Jeremiah 29:13 – "**Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**"
      - b. Luke 11:9 – "**Seek and ye shall find.**"
      - c. Isaiah 55:6 – "**Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.**"
    2. Would that ours would be a "*Seeking age!*"
- III. A Convert Who Became A Soul-Winner. (John 1:45)
  - A. Once he was found, Philip became instrumental in Nathaniel's conversion and call.

1. It was common for each new disciple to be on the track of either a relative or friend.
  2. What an incentive to personal evangelism we have in the call of those early disciples.
- B. The new convert became an evangelist, for now saved, Philip served.
1. When Nathaniel received the news that Philip so enthusiastically proclaimed, he asked for proof that the One who had found Philip was actually the Messiah.
  2. Philip, conscious of his limitations, responded, **“Come and see!”** (John 1:46)
  3. In the mass evangelism programs of our day, we seem to have lost sight of the necessity and effectiveness of personal evangelism and testimony.
- IV. A Scholar Who Was Dull. (John 6:1-7)
- A. Though Philip came to live with Christ he somehow failed to grasp the truth that Jesus came as the full revelation of God.
1. Being concerned about the human need, Jesus presented a problem to Philip.
  2. The disciple was slow in his response and the result of the inquiry was unbelief.
    - a. The meager sum of resources was useless to feed so many hungry mouths.
    - b. Unknown – *“Philip was a man who knew too much arithmetic to be adventurous.”*
- B. Christ’s design in this miracle was to test and grow Philip’s faith and deepen Philip’s grasp of the divine side of His mission.
- V. A Guide Who Failed To Lead. (John 12:20-22)
- A. These Gentiles, with a true desire to see the Christ they had heard so much about, approached Philip with their request to see Jesus.
1. Some how Philip could not make up his mind as to the propriety of introducing those seeking souls to Jesus.
  2. Thus he almost lost another opportunity of serving Him.
- B. Fortunately, Philip consulted Andrew, and together they went and told Jesus of the request of the Gentiles.
1. When given to doubt, consult a companion.
  2. Little did these two know that they were the unconscious agents of a great transition in history – namely, the guiding of the outstretched hands of heathenism in its search for God.
- VI. The Disciple Who Lacked Spiritual Insight. (John 14:6-8)
- A. Philip failed to see Jesus as the **“express image”** (Hebrews 1:3) of God’s Person.
- B. The only sight of the Father was in the face of Jesus, yet Philip came up short of seeing the treasure he wanted.
- C. After the resurrection, Philip came to understand that Jesus was indeed the **“Way”** to the Father, the **“Truth”** about the Father, and the **“Life”** from the Father. (John 14:6)

**CONCLUSION:** While much of Philip’s later life is not known to us, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that he overcame the initial defects in his character and fulfilled nobly the charge that his risen Lord laid upon him and the rest of the apostles before His ascension. In A.D. 54 he was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified.

**NATHANAEL (BARTHOLOMEW)**

**Text:** John 1:43-51

**Introduction:** Nathanael was momentarily stunned by the compliment. Jesus Christ had just called him a moral and upright man. What an honor it was for him when the Savior said, **“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile”** (John 1:47). With the eye of faith, Nathanael recognized Jesus. He accepted that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised One. He saw clearly because he was pure of heart. The Bible says, in Matthew 5:8, **“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”**

- I. A Man With Two Names.
  - A. Bartholomew is mentioned as a member of Jesus’ cabinet in all three of the Synoptic Gospels and in the Book of Acts. (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14, Acts 1:13)
  - B. Bartholomew has also been identified with Nathanael.
    1. Bartholomew is not itself a first name.
      - a. It is a distinguishing second name like Smith or Jones.
      - b. Since “*Bar*” means “*son of,*” Bartholomew probably means “*son of Tholmai.*”
    2. Both names are closely related in the Biblical text.
      - a. While John does not mention Bartholomew, he does tell us about Nathanael.
      - b. John gives him such a prominent place in the text that one is led to believe that he was one of the Twelve.
    3. Both names are identified by a mutual friendship.
      - a. In the first three gospels, the names of Philip and Bartholomew always occur together and in the fourth gospel it is Philip who brought Nathanael to Jesus.
      - b. Since Philip is associated with both Bartholomew and Nathanael, it is assumed that Bartholomew and Nathanael are one and the same person.
- II. Nathanael’s Experience. (John 1:45-46)
  - A. Jesus had challenged Philip to **“follow”** Him, to become just like Him, and Philip did.
    1. He went out and did exactly what Jesus had done to him.
    2. Jesus had sought him and found him; now, following His example, Philip sought out his friend Nathanael and found him.
  - B. Nathanael was gripped by despair and prejudice.
    1. He initially rejected Philip’s testimony and did it with a negative, skeptical spirit: **“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”**
    2. There was a sense of hopelessness in his question. (Cp. Ephesians 2:12-14)
    3. His prejudice is seen in his slur against Jesus coming from Nazareth. (Cp. Romans 2:11)
  - C. Nathanael was still invited to Jesus.
    1. His sin and prejudice did not discourage Philip from inviting him to **“come and see.”**
    2. We lead people to Christ, not by argument, but by confronting them with Jesus.

- III. Nathanael's Confrontation With Jesus. (John 1:47-48)
- A. Jesus knew his beliefs: **"an Israelite indeed."**
    1. He was the epitome of an Israelite, everything an Israelite should be.
      - a. He believed the promises of God.
      - b. He tried to live up to the covenant responsibilities.
      - c. He looked for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the Messiah.
    2. Christ knows the beliefs of every man. (John 2:24-25)
  - B. Jesus knew his character: **"in whom is no guile,"** or no *"deceit"* nor *"duplicity."*
    1. Nathanael was straightforward, open and honest, not deceptive or hypocritical.
    2. This was demonstrated in his response to Philip; he did not hide his true thoughts.
    3. One of the great tragedies of many is having a heart full of **"guile."** (Matt. 5:8)
  - C. Jesus knew everything about this man.
    1. This is a great warning to those who go their own way, thinking their sin is hid and will not be judged. (Luke 12:2)
    2. This is the great hope to the one who will cast himself upon Christ. (I Cor. 4:5)
- IV. Nathanael's Conviction. (John 1:49)
- A. He confessed Jesus as **"Rabbi,"** the great **"Prophet"** promised to Israel. (Deut. 18:15)
    1. He was the Son of God. (John 1:1-2, 34)
    2. He was the King of Israel. (II Samuel 7:12)
  - B. Having met Christ, what have you concluded regarding Him? (Matthew 10:32-33)
- V. Nathanael's Reward. (John 1:50-51)
- A. It was his belief in Jesus that brought **"greater things"** into Nathanael's life.
    1. The reward of his faith was an enlarged capacity for trust. (Matthew 17:20)
    2. His faith grew, not because he was known of God, but because he knew God. (Philippians 3:10)
  - B. It is Jesus Christ, Himself, Who is the Revelation of God. (Colossians 2:9)
- VI. Nathanael's Lapse. (John 21:1ff)
- A. Along with six other disciples, Nathanael was temporarily set back after Jesus' crucifixion.
  - B. Temporary set-backs need not become permanent defeats.
- VII. Nathanael's Martyrdom.
- A. The Christian calendar marks August 24 as Saint Bartholomew's Day.
    1. The occasion marks the anniversary of the *"St. Bartholomew Day Massacre,"* a tragic event in 1572 that took place in Paris when 30,000 believers, fighting for religious liberty, met their death.
    2. The massacre bears the name of *"Bartholomew"* because of the realistic way medieval artists had portrayed his martyrdom.
  - B. In Armenia, A.D. 44, Bartholomew was bound securely, flayed alive with knives, and then crucified for his faith.

**CONCLUSION:** Unlike Julius Caesar, who said, *"I came, I saw, I conquered,"* Nathanael, *"Came, saw, and was conquered."* His miracle of belief had, in the twinkling of an eye, led him from prejudice to purity, and his life of faith blossomed to the glory of God.

## THOMAS

**Text:** Matthew 10:2-4

**Introduction:** He was the original “*Doubting Thomas.*” When the other disciples came to him and excitedly shared the news of Christ’s resurrection, he said, “**Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe**” (John 20:25). He demanded proof before accepting their remarkable claim. But eight lonely days would pass by before he would come to accept the truth. Then, on the eighth day, while gathered with the other disciples, Jesus appeared in their midst. The Lord spoke to Thomas and invited him to touch His hands and side. But Thomas didn’t need to, because just the sight of his risen Master was evidence enough to convince him. He looked into the eyes of the Savior and said “**My Lord and my God**” (John 20:28).

### I. A Man With Little Background.

- A. “**Thomas**” is the Aramaic word for twin, or the Greek “**Didymus,**” which has given rise to some interesting speculations.
  - 1. Some suggest that his twin sister was Lydia, the “**seller of purple**” in Acts 16:14.
  - 2. Some think he was the twin of one of the other disciples, possibly Matthew whose name follows his in the listing of the Apostles in Matthew 10:3.
  - 3. Some have even suggested that he was the twin brother of our Lord (probably not).
  - 4. Let us leave speculation and accept the fact that we simply do not know who his twin was, or even if he had a twin.
- B. Tradition states that by trade he was a carpenter and a stone mason.
- C. The Synoptic Gospels tell us only of his name; it is in the fourth gospel that his personality comes to life.
  - 1. He took a dim view of Christ’s decision to attend Lazarus’ funeral. (John 11:1-16, esp. verse 16)
  - 2. He asked where Christ was going while they were in the Upper Room for the Last Supper. (John 14:1-5)
  - 3. He was not present on that first Easter Sunday when Christ appeared to the other Apostles. (John 20:24-25)
  - 4. He was confronted by Jesus with his own doubt. (John 20:26-28)
  - 5. He was present with six other disciples when Jesus cooked breakfast for them on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (Galilean). (John 21:1-2)

### II. A Man To Identify With.

- A. Thomas saw the extreme difficulty in situations.
  - 1. Lazarus, whose home had been a favorite place for rest and refreshment, was critically ill and the family had asked for Jesus to come. (John 11:3)
    - a. Previously Jesus had barely escaped from the vicinity of Jerusalem with His life.
    - b. Jesus did wait two days before making a decision. (John 11:6)
    - c. Naturally, the disciples protested His return to Bethany. (John 11:8)

2. The disciples were so upset by such recklessness that the normally silent Thomas exclaimed, **“Let us also go, that we may die with him”** (John 11:16).
  - a. He would go with his Lord.
  - b. His pessimism permitted him to only see the trouble that awaited them.
- B. Thomas struggled with the problems of faith and belief. (John 14:1-6)
  1. His doubt was not the hardened unbelief of the Pharisees.
  2. His doubt was an honest quest for the truth, and he struggled to believe.
- C. Thomas is known for his faults. (John 20:25)
  1. He was one of the most loyal, devoted and conscientious members of Jesus’ cabinet.
    - a. He left his home, family, friends and job to become a disciple.
    - b. He listened attentively to the pearls of wisdom that fell from the lips of his Master.
    - c. On at least one occasion he went with Jesus to Jerusalem despite his fear of almost certain death.
  2. One doubt about the resurrection, in the midst of countless expressions of belief, has saddled him with the epithet, *“Doubting Thomas.”*
    - a. It is one of those cruelties that we forever inflict upon our fellow men.
    - b. Thomas is known, not for the good things he did, but for his one mistake. (I Peter 4:8, Hebrews 3:13)
    - c. Thomas must have thought a thousand times, *“If only I had been there!”*

### III. A Man To Learn From.

- A. His life story is a series of object lessons in how to achieve faith.
  1. He teaches the value of an open and inquiring mind.
  2. He did not wait until all of his questions were answered before becoming a member of Jesus’ cabinet.
- B. Thomas did not give up when the going got tough.
  1. When it became obvious that Jesus was going to Bethany, despite their counsel, he said to the other disciples, **“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”**
  2. Somehow, by God’s grace, Thomas found enough courage to become involved, to go out on a limb with the Lord, and, if necessary, to die with Him.
- C. Thomas demonstrated great wisdom.
  1. He could not accept the Easter miracle, but he did not desert the ship.
  2. Thomas waited before he was able to affirm his faith in Jesus Christ.
  3. Maybe if we struggled with our unbelief a little longer, we too would be able to say with conviction, **“My Lord and my God!”** (John 20:28)
- D. Thomas was open to change.
  1. He so desperately wanted to believe that he was willing to be convinced.
  2. There are many stubborn people in the world today who, once persuaded of the rightness of an idea, cling to that idea even though it may later prove to be false.

**CONCLUSION:** Thomas came to see the necessity of total commitment to Jesus Christ. Once convinced of the truth, Thomas acted upon it without reservation. Consequently, his remaining years were spent in devoted service. History tell us that Thomas preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where, exciting the rage of some pagan priests, he was thrust through with a spear.

## MATTHEW

**Text:** Matthew 9:9

**Introduction:** Matthew was not only unpopular; he was despised. Although he was Jewish, he worked for the Roman government as the tax collector and made his income by cheating and overcharging. It was a financially good job, but socially the worst. He was the guy nobody liked. But one day, while Matthew was working at his collection station, Jesus came to him and said, “**Follow me.**” From that moment on he was a transformed person.

- I. A Hebrew Son. (Luke 5:27-32)
  - A. All the Apostles were Jewish, and therefore probably familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures from their youth. (II Timothy 3:14-15)
    1. Matthew came from a pious parentage, and the gospel he came to write reveals how conversant he was with the Old Testament and the traditions of the rabbis.
    2. The masterful way in which Matthew sets forth “*The King and His Kingdom*” proves that he had been carefully instructed in all that pertained to the Jewish religion.
  - B. While we learn practically nothing about Matthew from the gospel he wrote, his knowledge of the history and noble traditions of his race appears on almost every page.
- II. A Roman Tax Collector. (Matthew 9:9-13)
  - A. Caesar’s tax men were usually Roman gentlemen sent into the provinces of the Empire to collect the tribute for the Emperor.
    1. All who took this work had their reward in that they could extort for their own benefit more than the Caesars demanded.
    2. The Jews, who deeply resented Roman domination, held that if any one of their nation took on the office of publican, he was disloyal to God and society.
    3. It was not surprising that the popular sentiment was to classify a publican with the most disreputable of people – “**sinners.**” (Matthew 9:11)
  - B. In the desire to gain tainted money, think of what Matthew lost. (Matthew 6:24)
    1. He sold his home circle.
      - a. He placed himself outside the fellowship of his loved ones.
      - b. He turned his back on his orthodox Jewish friends and acquaintances.
    2. He sold his country.
      - a. His kinsmen suffered under the oppression of Rome.
      - b. His flame of pure patriotism was quenched by a baser love.
    3. He sold his conscience.
      - a. He knew that tax-collecting represented a most dishonest profession.
      - b. Lust for money stifled the warning of the inner heart.
    4. He sold his faith.
      - a. His very name, Levi, was a link with a godly ancestry.
      - b. Money cost Matthew exclusion from the synagogue and separation from his people.

III. A Sacrificial Convert. (Matthew 9:9)

- A. It is interesting to observe how and where the Lord met those He challenged to enter into His service.
  - 1. The call came to them right where they were.
  - 2. They did not have to dress up and go to church to meet Him.
  - 3. The Great Commission sends disciples to where sinners are. (Luke 14:23)
- B. Without delay Matthew rose, left his business and followed Jesus.
  - 1. He sacrificed wealth and occupation for an unknown perilous future.
  - 2. When none would have his company, Jesus offered Himself as his Savior and Friend.
  - 3. In responding to Christ, Matthew received salvation, fellowship, and guidance.
  - 4. Yesterday, he was a companion of sinners; today, a disciple; tomorrow, a prophet.
  - 5. At the heart of the call, "**Follow Me,**" is the surrender to a Person, not a creed.

IV. A Grateful Host. (Luke 5:29-32)

- A. Having experienced the joy of sins forgiven, he sought to tell others the good news.
- B. There are several aspects of this feast worth noting.
  - 1. It was arranged in Matthew's house which was large enough to hold such a feast.
  - 2. The invited included a strange mixture of "*righteous*" and "*sinners*."
  - 3. Jesus' presence was a fulfillment of His mission to extend forgiveness to those considered outcasts.
  - 4. Jesus suffered shame gladly for the sake of Matthew and his friends, and such an attitude must have resulted in the deepening of Matthew's own spiritual life.

V. The Apostle Who Wrote A Great Gospel.

- A. The choice of Matthew by the Master is a further proof that He attracted men from every walk of life.
  - 1. Who would have looked among the publicans for an apostle?  
(I Corinthians 1:26-27, "**For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.**")
  - 2. The marvel is that as soon as Matthew heard the call, he responded, and his surrender to Christ is one of the most inspiring incidents in the gospel.
  - 3. Matthew's life should give encouragement to those who labor for the salvation of souls in the most unlikely places.
- B. In the choice of Matthew we have evidence of the far-seeing discernment of Christ who knows what is in each man.
  - 1. Seeing the tax-collector, Jesus could see what service such a man could render.
  - 2. It has been said, that when Matthew rose up and left all, the only thing he took with him was his pen and ink.

**CONCLUSION:** Matthew's transformed life is a reminder to the outcasts of society that they can also experience the power of Christ to change the current of life. Matthew wrote about what he had seen and experienced of His grace, and became a guidepost to others who have lost their way. Matthew is traditionally believed to have died as a martyr in A.D. 60.

## **JAMES (SON OF ALPHEAUS)**

**Text:** Luke 6:12-16

**Introduction:** A certain hymn reminds us that we shall only be “*remembered by what we have done.*” James is an apostle who is remembered only by his name, for we do not have a single authentic word in the New Testament as to the life he lived or the service he rendered. To Jesus, though, this James was more than a name, for knowing all about his worth He included him in the twelve He chose to labor with Him, and then to go out into the world preaching and teaching the truth received from Him.

### I. His Genealogy.

- A. The name James has its root in the name Jacob, a common name in the time of Jesus.
- B. There are four men named James mentioned in the New Testament.
  - 1. James, the son of Zebedee, brother of the apostle John, who was the second martyr of the faith; Stephen being the first one. (Matthew 4:21, Acts 12:2)
  - 2. James, the son of Mary, and half-brother of our Lord, who was not a member of the apostolic band, nor a disciple until later. (Mark 6:3, James 1:1)
  - 3. James, the father of another of the apostles. (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13)
  - 4. James, the son of Alphaeus. (Luke 6:15)
    - a. Tradition has it that he had been a tax-collector, and the brother of Matthew, who also is described as a son of Alphaeus. (Mark 2:14)
    - b. This family was highly honored in having two sons who became apostles.
    - c. It is this James whom we are now discussing.

### II. His Apostleship. (Luke 6:12-16)

- A. Although no single incident is narrated of James, his name is preserved for us as one chosen to be an apostle by our Lord after a night of prayer.
  - 1. There must have been something about James that prompted Jesus to include him among the twelve, all of whom were sent forth to preach and teach the gospel.
  - 2. When Jesus confessed to His Father, “**Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition**” (John 17:12), He must have had James in mind as well.
- B. Although James was a background disciple, he never caused Jesus any anxiety by backsliding, doubt, or misunderstanding.
  - 1. James could be relied upon to render faithful, unsung, service. (I Corinthians 12:18-23)
  - 2. After Jesus’ ascension, James vanished from the scene as far as the Scriptures go.
  - 3. History tells us that at the age of 94, James was beat and stoned by the Jews, and finally had his brains smashed out with a club.
  - 4. Perhaps Jesus counted James the Apostle as a representative of a long line of disciples of whom no earthly record would be kept, and whose names would not be remembered beyond their quiet, faithful, and unknown ministry in His Church. (Hebrews 11:32-39)

### III. His Obscurity.

- A. The distinguishing feature of James is the obscurity with which he was content.
  - 1. He sought no general recognition.
  - 2. Background discipleship was what the Lord willed for him, and he was happy to have it so.
  - 3. His merit consisted in that he went where he was sent by Jesus, fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, all without any thought of applause.
- B. Most of us are commonplace individuals, having no exceptional gifts or powers.
  - 1. We are inconspicuous, simple, ordinary folk.
  - 2. The commonplace character of our limitations should not make us indifferent about living to the full in our small corner.
  - 3. Much of the world's most needed and blessed work is done by those whom the world knows nothing of. (Matthew 6:1)
- C. The son of Alphaeus did nothing extraordinary, nothing that the world thought needed any record of.
  - 1. If he was not capable of anything great, nothing great would have been expected of him. (Luke 12:48b)
  - 2. Jesus did expect James, as an apostle, to live at his best. (I Corinthians 4:1-5)
    - a. Peter stamped his personality and message upon the early Christian church.
    - b. Paul left an indelible mark upon the church's theology.
    - c. John, the apostle of love, left his own image upon the Christian life.
    - d. James left only his name.
  - 3. The Master who elected him as one of His friends would have us remember that we must be faithful in that which is least. (Matthew 25:14-29)
- D. Faithful, patient, and humble service may go unrecorded and unnoticed of men, but the faithfulness of brave and loyal hearts is not forgotten by Him whose eye is on the sparrow.
  - 1. The unrecognized saints and heroes of the faith are a great host.
  - 2. They do their best, even though others never notice them, and this is the triumph and final achievement of their devotion to God.

### IV. His Reward.

- A. Although the labors of James may be unrecorded, they will not go unrewarded.
  - 1. The gospels may only give us his name, but his name lives forever engraved on one of the twelve foundations of the Eternal City. (Revelation 21:14)
  - 2. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Master's "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant!**" (Matthew 25:21, 23), will be for both the unknown as well as the well-known.
- B. Paul draws a sharp contrast between the condition of the saints here and their appearance in heaven. (II Corinthians 6:9-10)
  - 1. Faithfulness is the basis of eternal reward. (Revelation 2:10b)
  - 2. Unknown – *"The Faithful Judge will honor, not our fame, but our faithfulness."*

**CONCLUSION:** Since the hour James met Christ and became His apostle, he found himself harnessed to his Master's chariot, and as a slave to His love, lived only for His glory, and died without leaving any record. Likewise, may we be more concerned with our faithfulness than our fame.

## THADDAEUS

**Text:** Mark 3:13-19

**Introduction:** Judas Thaddaeus is not your everyday name, but then Judas Thaddaeus wasn't just your everyday sort of guy. He was fortunate enough to be one of the twelve men personally singled out by Jesus Christ for discipleship. He is another one of the "*silent*" disciples. Like James, his name does not come under the spotlight of the Scriptures as some of the others. In fact, the Bible records only one encounter between this man and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- I. Thaddaeus' Dialogue. (John 14:22-25)
  - A. It was a Thursday evening, in or about A.D. 29.
    1. The scene was an upper room in the city of Jerusalem.
    2. Jesus and the members of His cabinet were seated at a table.
    3. The towel had been laid aside in anticipation of the well-known Passover Feast ritual.
  - B. Jesus surprised the disciples by instituting a new observance.
    1. Taking the bread from the table He gave it to them saying, "**Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me**" (I Corinthians 11:24).
    2. Likewise, after the supper, He took the cup and gave it to them, saying, "**This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me**" (I Corinthians 11:25).
    3. In the past, they had shared the fellowship of the table, but this time it would be different.
      - a. Bread – body?
      - b. Cup – blood?
      - c. What was the meaning of all this?
    4. It is doubtful that any who sat about the table that night fully understood what was taking place.
  - C. Then Jesus poured out His heart.
    1. He likened the disciples as branches joined to Him as the vine. (John 15:5)
    2. He warned them of the persecution that awaited them. (John 15:18-20)
    3. He spoke words of encouragement to them about His Second Coming and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (John 15:26)
    4. Within a few hours the following would unfold in rapid succession: Gethsemane, the arrest, the trials, the Crucifixion, and death.
  - D. He previously said that He was "**the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**" (John 14:6)
    1. This "*silent disciple*" then spoke. (John 14:22)
    2. Thaddaeus knew that Jesus Christ was God, but he earnestly wondered how he could worship God if Jesus were not present.
    3. Aside from his name appearing in the lists of the Twelve and this one incident, we are left to infer about the character of this big man.

- II. Thaddaeus' Character.
- A. His name made him a big man.
1. In our society a name is simply a means of distinguishing one person from another.
  2. In Bible times, names were frequently used to reveal pertinent information about a person's character or career.
  3. Thaddaeus' original name was Judas "**Lebbaeus**," with the nickname of "**Thaddaeus**." (Matthew 10:3)
    - a. Thaddaeus, in Aramaic, means "*the bold or courageous one*."
    - b. "**Lebbaeus**" means "*the hearty one*."
    - c. If his name holds a clue to his character, Thaddaeus was a bold and courageous man, a man of strong and sturdy convictions, and a man warm and affectionate in all of his human relationships.
- B. His selection as one of the Twelve made him a big man.
1. The president of the United States does not normally reach down into the grass roots of America to select a member of his cabinet.
  2. The disciples were ill-prepared to fulfill the responsibilities of their office, but they were big in spirit, with infinite capacity for love, learning and labor.
  3. Thaddaeus must have been of this caliber, or our Lord would have passed him over in favor of someone else.
- C. His questioning disposition made him a big man.
1. One of the principal differences between a big person and a little person is the use they make of interrogation.
    - a. The small fry is given more to talking, not listening.
    - b. The big man is always ready to listen and learn.
  2. Thaddaeus spent his time with Jesus watching, listening, and observing.
  3. When something was said which he did not understand, he asked for clarification: "*Lord*," he said, "*I'm puzzled. How can Your Kingdom be kept secret when You have already broadcast it openly?*" (John 14:22)
  4. Being able to ask the right question is a far better sign of character than thinking you know all the right answers.
- D. His discernment made him a big man.
1. Thaddaeus did not understand Jesus' answer to his question (John 14:23), but he had enough discernment to know what he heard was right, so he stayed around long enough to get further information.
  2. Thaddaeus was to discover that Jesus would only be seen by those with eyes of faith.
    - a. Beside the sea. (John 21:4-14)
    - b. On the crest of Olivet. (Acts 1:6-12)
    - c. The Upper Room. (Acts 1:13)
  3. That Thaddaeus joined in with the others after Christ's resurrection and ascension suggests that he was not prone to jump to conclusions, but he was willing to give God the opportunity to reveal Himself more fully.

**CONCLUSION:** Perhaps you are like Thaddaeus . . . searching . . . wondering . . . living with questions. Jesus Christ is the answer and end to your searching. The only life worth living is worth dying for. Tradition tells us that Thaddaeus was crucified in A.D. 72.

## SIMON

**Text:** Luke 6:15

**Introduction:** They called themselves “*Zealots*” and the name fit them well. This feisty little band of men somehow got the idea that they could take on the entire Roman army. Their lives burned with devotion to a cause they believed to be just. One of these Zealots was called by Jesus to be an Apostle. His name was Simon, and the fiery passion which already gripped his heart was remarkably transformed. God changed his dreams for social change into an exciting vision for spiritual change.

- I. A Lover Of His Country.
  - A. Simon’s appendage, “**Zealotes,**” suggests that he was an enthusiastic patriot.
    1. The distinctive existence of the Zealots seems to date from the time of the Maccabees (167-37 B.C.), when a determined stand was made against foreign influence in religious life.
    2. The Zealots were the “*Pharisees of the Pharisees,*” the strictest sect of the rabbinical schools which insisted on the literal obligations of the traditional renderings of the Law.
    3. They looked for a Messiah who would restore the Kingdom of Israel with all the glory of the old theocracy.
    4. The red-hot flaming patriots banded themselves together under Judas of Samala to deliver Judea from Roman dominion, and the history of the crimes they were guilty of in the cause of patriotism makes sad reading.
  - B. These fanatical Jews declared that Rome had not merely destroyed the independence of Israel, but had made it difficult for them to observe many of the ceremonies prescribed by the Law of Moses.
    1. From their headquarters in Galilee, they stirred up sedition and rebellion and at every opportunity inflamed the people against their conquerors.
    2. About the time of Christ, several of their leaders were put to death.
    3. Barabbas, who was cast into prison for sedition and murder, and released at the expense of Jesus, was one of these Zealots. (Luke 23:19)
    4. Simon, as a Zealot, loved his country and was prepared to die for it, but then he found Christ and died for Him as a martyr in A.D. 74 by crucifixion.
- II. A Lover Of A Better Leader.
  - A. A mighty transformation took place when Simon left the control of the fanatical Judas of Samala for the sweet yoke of Jesus of Nazareth! (Matthew 11:28-29)
    1. How Simon came to Christ we are not told, but his means of coming to Christ was the same as it is with all – grace through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
    2. Through amazing grace the fiery patriot came to a lasting zeal for Christ.
    3. What exactly prompted Simon to leave the fanatical Zealots we are not told.
    4. All we do know for certain is that it was a happy exchange for him when he left the insurrection party for the Prince of Peace. (Romans 5:1)

5. When he met Christ, there took place a union of hearts, for Simon recognized in Jesus the promised Messiah of Israel. (II Corinthians 5:18)
- B. Simon entered a new world with a new Leader who had no use for the bloodshed, hatred, and deceit the Zealots practiced. (II Corinthians 5:17)
  1. He had found One talking of the love of God, of vindicating His truth, of loving your enemies, and of doing good to those who spitefully use you. (John 3:16, John 1:17, Luke 6:27)
  2. Jesus taught that the greatest snare of Israel was not the Roman Empire, but the nation's sin and departure from God.
- C. While we hear nothing more of Simon after his choice as an apostle, we can believe that in his development and growth, there was no one among the twelve with a warmer enthusiasm and willingness to face danger or death for the Master.
  1. With his tendency to violence and use of worldly weapons restrained, he likely became one of the boldest and strongest followers of the Son of David.
  2. The one-time fierce and untamable patriot became a rich trophy of divine grace, and the forerunner of another rebel who, on his way to Damascus, was suddenly arrested by the Lord and made His slave.
- D. Viewing the twelve apostles as a whole we see how they form a practical exposition of the function of the Church. (I Corinthians 12:12, 28)
  1. The qualification for entering into its fellowship is union with Christ. (I Corinthians 12:12)
  2. The diversity of backgrounds lends itself to the fulfillment of God's perfect work in each believer's life. (I Corinthians 12:4-7)

### III. A Lover Of Inner Peace.

- A. Surveying the apostles as a whole, we see how deep-seated antagonisms vanished and men of utterly diverse viewpoints became comrades in their service for Christ.
  1. There was love among the brethren. (John 13:34-35)
  2. He who came as our Peace, bound the twelve disciples together in a bond of peace.
- B. Consider the contrast between Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Publican.
  1. Tax-Hater – Tax-Collector.
  2. Jewish patriot, chafing under a foreign yoke – an unpatriotic Jew who degraded himself by becoming an agent of the Roman rulers.
  3. Before they met Christ, they would have hated each other, but through the call of Christ, they were brought together in Christ's love.
  4. Jesus loved each, and each loved Him, and so it was an easy step to love one another.
- C. Practical lessons.
  1. No type of mind and character is excluded from the Kingdom, and no transformation of one's self is required for one to be found acceptable to Christ.
  2. We serve Christ best when we are blended together with those who are opposite us, those who can bring strengths to our weaknesses.

**CONCLUSION:** Simon the Zealot calls attention to the fact that cold-hearted, lifeless disciples will never win the world for Jesus Christ. When Simon joined Jesus's band, he brought his zeal with him and it magnified the power of his witness.

## MARTHA AND MARY

**Text:** Luke 10:38-42

**Introduction:** Martha and Mary seem to belong together in every study written by an expositor. Each had their own ministry, however, and one does not belittle the other. Most people will refer to them as “*Mary and Martha*,” whereas Jesus placed Martha first, then followed by Mary. Along with their brother Lazarus, they lived in Bethany, a small village about two miles east of the Mount of Olives. Their home became a favorite place of Jesus.

The New Testament records three encounters with Jesus experienced by Martha and Mary.

- I. Encounter #1: A Distracted Faith. (Luke 10:38-42)
  - A. John 11:5 tells us, “**Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.**”
  - B. Martha was of a highly commendable character.
    1. She was a giving person.
      - a. Possessing a large house, she could give lodging to Jesus and His apostles.
      - b. To be able to take care of such a large contingent must have been expensive, but she willingly entertained them.
    2. She was courageous.
      - a. It was now dangerous to associate too closely with Jesus, especially in the area surrounding Jerusalem.
      - b. Many of His own disciples had forsaken Him (John 6:66), but Martha welcomed Him into her own home.
    3. She was caring.
      - a. She felt a deep devotion for her own family, caring for both Mary and Lazarus who lived with her.
      - b. She cared even in the midst of the disturbance she felt toward Mary. (10:40)
  - C. Mary was also of admirable character.
    1. She was loving and humble.
      - a. She attached herself to Jesus.
      - b. The room or courtyard was obviously large enough to entertain a large crowd, so her place of sitting was by choice.
      - c. Her love for the Savior ran so deep that she positioned herself at Jesus’ feet, not at His side nor in front of Him.
    2. She was spiritually hungry, longing to hear “**His word**,” above all other things.
      - a. She centered her mind on the things He said. (John 5:39)
      - b. She absorbed His words and took them to heart. (II Timothy 3:16-17)
  - D. Martha became distracted – “**cumbered about**” – with service.
    1. “*Doing*” for the Savior had become more important than “*Being*” with the Savior.
    2. “*Lord, I have so much to do for You that I don’t have time to listen to You!*”
    3. Martha was anxious about many things when only one thing was really needed; food for the soul is more important than food for the body. (Job 23:12, Matt. 4:4)

- II. Encounter #2: A Questioning Faith. (John 11:20-29)
- A. This encounter primarily features a conversation between Jesus and Martha.
    1. Martha was again the woman of action and energy, brimming with initiative.
    2. Mary was the contemplative one, remaining at home with the mourners.
  - B. We read of Martha's complaint – **“if Thou hadst been here . . .”** (11:21-22)
    1. She trusted Jesus as her Savior, but could not understand His actions and timing.
    2. She did not say, *“Lord, I know that You can do anything,”* but said, **“Whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”**
    3. She still saw Jesus at some level below **“God,”** and had yet to grasp that Jesus Himself is **“the resurrection, and the life.”** (11:23-25)
  - C. Jesus made a striking declaration: **“Thy brother shall rise again.”**
    1. Martha misunderstood, thinking in terms of the resurrection at the last day.
    2. How often do we miss the promises of God because we think in terms of our own limited knowledge?
    3. It was Gabriel, who regularly stands in the presence of God, who told Mary, **“For with God nothing shall be impossible”** (Luke 2:19, 37).
    4. In our alone times with God, do we remember that our God is *“the God of the Impossible?”*
  - D. Through this encounter, Martha moves beyond her brother's needs and reveals a growing faith by confessing: **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”** (11:27).
- III. Encounter #3: A Mature Faith. (John 12:1-7)
- A. Six days before the Passover, Jesus is again dining in Martha's, Mary's, and Lazarus' home.
    1. Verse 2 reads, **“There THEY made Him a supper; and Martha served . . .”**
    2. It seems that on this occasion, Mary helped Martha with the meal, although Martha served.
    3. This is the last mention of Martha in the New Testament.
  - B. Mary expresses a sacrificial love by anointing Jesus' feet with an **“ointment of spikenard, very costly.”** (12:3)
    1. Perfume was a very precious commodity to Eastern women living in the dry, aired land of the day.
    2. A **“very costly”** bottle of ointment could easily be worth a working man's annual income.
    3. Think of the costly sacrifice being made.
  - C. Mary expresses a believing love.
    1. Mary alone sensed the foreboding and preoccupation of mind within Jesus.
    2. She gave to Jesus in such a way that He would know that at least one person truly loved Him and believed Him to be the Messiah.
    3. We should always give our best to the Lord, for He has given His best for us.

**Conclusion:** The presence of Jesus – a sense of His presence and of His Word – does not always pound on our hearts. Though noble in Christian character, it is still possible to lose sight of the Savior in our service for Him. When our hearts are truly knit together with His, no sacrifice is too great to offer Him. **“Believeth thou this?”** (John 11:26)

## LAZARUS

**Text:** John 11:1-6

**Introduction:** Lazarus is the name of two men identified in the New Testament: the beggar in Jesus' story about a rich man and a poor man (Luke 16:19-25), and the brother of Martha and Mary of Bethany (John 11:1ff). This lesson concerns itself with the second man, whom Jesus raised from the dead after declaring, **"I am the resurrection, and the life"** (John 11:25). A later narrative finds him sitting with Jesus in the family home of Martha and Mary after his resurrection miracle (John 12:1-2).

- I. Divine Purposes. (John 11:1-16)
  - A. Lazarus' sickness. (11:1-3)
    1. Jesus had said, **"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"** (Matthew 8:20).
    2. At this particular time Jesus was being rejected by almost everyone, and was an unwelcomed guest in most homes.
    3. However, there was one family who always opened their home to Jesus when He was about Jerusalem.
  - B. Seven purposes for Lazarus' death. (11:4-16)
    1. To glorify God that **"the Son of God might be glorified."** (11:4)
      - a. Lazarus' sickness was not FOR death.
      - b. In raising Lazarus from the dead, both the Father and the Son were glorified as *"the LIFE of the world."* (Cp. John 1:4)
    2. To show Jesus' great love. (11:5)
      - a. Note how each member of the family is mentioned personally.
      - b. Though God loves the whole world, He also loves each of us individually. (John 13:1)
    3. To show the necessity of waiting upon God. (11:6)
      - a. Jesus was not waiting for Lazarus to die so that He could perform a miracle.
      - b. Upon His arrival in Bethany, Lazarus had already been dead four days. (Cp. 11:17)
      - c. Jesus was teaching the great lesson of waiting **"on the Lord."** (Psalm 27:14, **"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."** Cp. Isaiah 40:31)
      - d. James Montgomery Boice writes, *"God has His timings, which are not ours, and therefore what we pray for and need is sometimes delayed. What then? Are we to despair of having answers, to lose confidence? Not at all! We simply need to wait."*
    4. To teach the need to grasp the opportunity. (11:7-10)
      - a. Though having waited, the time had now arrived for Jesus to act.
      - b. The disciples protested as to the danger involved in acting *"now."*
      - c. Jesus reminded them of the need to do right at the opportune time lest the moment be lost. (John 9:4)

5. To show Jesus' great power over death. (11:11-14)
  - a. **"Death"** is called **"sleep"** in order to picture the idea of the believer resting in the presence and comfort of God. (II Corinthians 5:8)
  - b. Consider the words of Paul when he wrote, **"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Corinthians 15:54b-57).
6. To strengthen the disciples' belief. (11:15)
  - a. Jesus rejoiced in the prospect of Lazarus' resurrection.
  - b. The anticipation of Lazarus' resurrection would be a prelude to the expressed faith of many generations to come. (John 20:30-31)
7. To stir the disciples' courage and loyalty. (11:16)
  - a. Though often accused of being *"The Doubter,"* it is Thomas who takes the lead here.
  - b. His loyalty forbids the thought of allowing Jesus going alone to Bethany.
  - c. For Thomas, to die for Christ is better than to live without Him. (Matthew 16:24)

## II. Divine Power, Over Death. (11:38-46)

- A. The scene. (11:38-39)
  1. Jesus sensed the dread that death held over His dear friend Lazarus, as well as the whole world.
  2. He felt the emotions of both compassion and anger, sensing an intense love for all who suffer and a holy displeasure against death. (Cp. John 11:33-36)
- B. The promise. (11:40)
  1. Jesus challenged Martha to take a great leap of faith.
  2. The person willing to step back and let God be God – the person who truly believes God – will see the glory of God. (Job 22:21, **"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."**)
- C. The prayer. (11:41-42)
  1. Jesus prays with a specific purpose in mind, and in so doing demonstrates the purpose and power of prayer.
  2. Note Jesus' prayer:
    - a. He addressed God as **"Father."**
    - b. He requested the Father to do something.
    - c. He offered thanks for the privilege of, and answer to, prayer.
    - d. He expressed His confidence in God.
- D. The power. (11:43-44)
  1. Jesus' shout matched the enormity of the need.
  2. Jesus' shout was personal, directed at an individual.
- E. The reaction. (11:45-46)

**Conclusion:** Though literally **"dead in trespasses and sins"** (Ephesians 2:1), when Lazarus heard the voice of Jesus he responded in obedience and faith.

## JUDAS

**Text:** Matthew 26:20-25

**Introduction:** Imagine yourself as an artist painting “*The Last Supper.*” You’ve spent many long hours painstakingly brushing in every detail. The canvas is beginning to come alive – the dimly lit room, the massive table surrounded by Jesus and the others. You have just one figure left to portray before the portrait is complete: you haven’t yet drawn Judas. Thoughtfully you study the scene and wonder: “*What did he really look like?*”

- I. His Background.
  - A. Judas was born and reared in Kerioth, located about ten miles south of Hebron and thirty miles south of Jerusalem, close to the Sinai desert.
  - B. He was given an honorable name.
    1. When properly interpreted, Judas means “*praise of God.*”
    2. It was a popular name among the Jews.
      - a. In 167 B.C. a man by the name of Judas Maccabaeus led the Israelites in a revolt against their conquerors and somehow managed to win their nation’s independence.
      - b. Almost immediately he was heralded as a national hero.
      - c. What George Washington is for Americans, Judas Maccabaeus was to the Jews of the first century.
    3. Since Judas was a name which represented the finest in character, Judas Iscariot wore it proudly.
  - C. He was held in highest esteem among his peers, even serving as the band’s “**treasurer**” (John 12:6).
    1. There was no undercurrent; none of the others ever suspected him of foul play.
    2. Even in the Upper Room, when Jesus said, “**One of you shall betray Me**” (Matthew 26:21), no disciple pointed an accusing finger at him and said, “*Judas, thou art the man!*”
  - D. Somewhere along the way Judas misused his talent, prostituted his ability, and disintegrated as a person, until he betrayed the Lord. (Cp. John 6:70-71, 17:12)
- II. Judas Betrayal. (Matthew 26:14-16)
  - A. Impatience?
    1. No doubt Judas shared the expectation of the disciples that Jesus’ Kingdom would be an earthly dominion. (Matthew 20:20-24)
    2. If the betrayal was his way of forcing the Master to begin a revolution that would usher in the Kingdom of God, perhaps impatience destroyed him. (Psalm 37:7-9)
  - B. Greed?
    1. The price of Judas’ betrayal was thirty pieces of silver, equivalent to the price of a slave. (Matthew 26:15)
    2. It would be thought that such a reward for such a sinister deed would hardly be enough to tempt a man to betray One he loved. (I Timothy 6:10)

- C. Vindictiveness?
  1. Judas may have betrayed Jesus to get revenge for the rebuke given when Mary anointed the feet of the Master with her costly ointment. (John 12:1-8)
  2. As a sensible, calculating, and intelligent man, Judas must have known that vengeance is never sweet. (Romans 12:19-21)
- D. Resentment?
  1. Being the only disciple from Judea, he may have often felt the aloneness of being an outsider.
  2. Peter, James, and John especially formed an inner circle of friendship with Jesus, in which Judas, perhaps the brightest and best trained in the group, was not included.
  3. When called to be an Apostle, Judas had possibilities of becoming a great Christian leader, but he developed in the opposite direction. (Hebrews 12:12-17)

### III. Judas' Message For Today.

- A. Judas models sin.
  1. Maybe he thought his betrayal would force the hand of Jesus; maybe it was an attempt at revenge; maybe it was a final manifestation of greed; maybe it was pure resentment; but whatever pleasure he derived from the deed, it came only in anticipation.
  2. Once the kiss had been placed on the cheek of the Master, Judas felt contempt and remorse. (Matthew 26:49)
    - a. The feeling was so intense that he tried to get rid of it by giving up his coins. (Matthew 27:3-4)
    - b. When that failed, he fled out into the night, grabbed up a piece of rope and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:5)
- B. Judas depicts the habit of sin.
  1. He did not mean to go wrong.
  2. He never intended to commit history's most dastard crime.
  3. At first he was just disappointed and jealous.
  4. Then his selfishness demanded more.
  5. One thing led to another until, at last, he was caught in an unbreakable web of sin.
  6. Habitual sin turned Judas Iscariot, once an honored apostle, into a traitor.
- C. Judas reveals the frightening consequences of sin.
  1. Judas was free to betray or not to betray Jesus.
  2. Once the course was set, he was not free from the guilt and shame that followed.
  3. Unknown – *“Right is right and wrong is wrong, it is never right to do wrong and we can't do wrong and feel right about it.”*
  4. The penalty for trespassing against the laws of God is severe. (Galatians 6:7)

**CONCLUSION:** Judas was one of the Twelve, a member of Jesus' cabinet, and a personal friend of our Lord. He lived with Him, was taught by Him, served with Him, witnessed His miracles, and became a dedicated disciple. Yet, somehow, he fell away. It is possible to be in Christ's company, a member of His church, and be guilty of the foulest betrayal. An excessive amount of self-confidence can be dangerous. Ephesians 4:27 warns, **“Neither give place to the devil.”**

## STEPHEN

**Text:** Acts 6:1-8

**Introduction:** Stephen was one of seven men, “**of honest report, [and] full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,**” selected by the early church in Jerusalem to assist the Apostles with the “**daily ministrations**” of the growing ministry. The Scriptures tell us nothing of his background, but the Biblical account of his life found in the Book of Acts gives assurance of his godly character.

- I. Stephen, The Servant. (Acts 6:1-8)
  - A. In the period following Pentecost (Acts 2), the number of Christians in the early Church grew rapidly.
    1. The growing number of new believers, not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles, put a growing demand upon the Apostles’ ministries.
      - a. In response to the need, seven Greek men were selected by the church to handle the work of providing aid to the “**neglected.**”
      - b. Stephen, being the first named among the listed, has been regarded by many Bible teachers as the leader of this group.
    2. Although they are not specifically referred to as “*deacons*,” these seven men are considered to be the forerunners of the office that later developed. (Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:8-13)
      - a. The word “**deacon**” simply means “*servant.*”
      - b. The seven men were humble servants of the church, men whose work made it possible for the Apostles to carry on their “**ministry of the word.**”
  - B. Note Stephen’s character.
    1. He is described as a man of “**wisdom.**” (6:3, cp. James 1:5)
    2. He is described as “**a man full of faith.**” (6:5, 8)
    3. He is described as “**a man full of . . . the Holy Spirit.**” (6:5)
    4. He is described as a man “**full of . . . power.**” (6:8)
    5. He is seen as a man full of Scripture knowledge. (Acts 7)
    6. He is seen as a man full of courage. (Acts 7:51)
    7. He is seen as a man full of supreme love. (Acts 8:60)
- II. Stephen, The Witness. (Acts 6:9-15)
  - A. Stephen’s powerful testimony would be the climax of the church’s witness to the Jews.
    1. Nobody could resist Stephen’s wisdom and power. (6:10, cp. Luke 21:15)
    2. Their only alternative was to destroy him.
  - B. The treatment of Stephen parallels the way the Jewish leaders treated Jesus.
    1. They sought false witnesses to testify against him. (6:11, 13, cp. Matthew 26:59)
    2. They stirred up the people who accused him of attacking the Law of Moses and the Temple. (6:12, 14, cp. John 9:29)
    3. After listening to him, they executed him. (6:15-7:1, cp. John 19:6)

### III. Stephen, The Advocate. (Acts 7:1-53)

- A. Stephen's defense was more than a recitation of familiar facts.
  - 1. It was a refutation of Israel's indictment against Stephen and a revelation of her national sins.
  - 2. Stephen proved from their own Scriptures that the Jewish nation was guilty of far worse sins than those they had accused him of committing.
- B. Stephen's accusations:
  - 1. They misunderstood their own spiritual roots. (7:1-8)
    - a. Stephen's address opens with "*the God of glory*" (7:2), and closes with "**the glory of God**" (7:55).
      - (1) Israel has been a nation privileged by the "*glory of God*" as being part of her inheritance. (Romans 9:4)
      - (2) Yet, because of her peoples' idolatry and unbelief, the "*glory of God*" had previously departed from her Temple. (Ezekiel 10:4, 18)
    - b. God's glory had now come in Jesus (John 1:14), but the nation rejected Him.
    - c. The Jews had blinded themselves to the simple faith of the patriarchs, and had cluttered it up with their man-made traditions.
  - 2. They rejected their God-sent deliverers. (7:9-36)
    - a. Joseph's brethren hated him, and sold him into slavery, only to recognize him later as their deliverer. (7:13)
    - b. Israel first rejected Moses when he tried to deliver them from Egyptian bondage, and he had to flee for his life. (Exodus 2:11-22)
    - c. Only after coming to them a second time did they accept Moses. (7:35-36)
    - d. Israel rejected their Messiah when He came the first time (John 1:11), but will recognize and receive Him when He comes again. (Revelation 1:7)
  - 3. They disobeyed their Law. (7:37-43)
    - a. The history of Israel reveals that the nation had repeatedly broken the Law.
    - b. No sooner had they received the Law than they disobeyed it by forming an idol (Exodus 32), breaking the first two Commandments. (Exodus 20:1-6)
  - 4. They despised their Temple. (7:44-50)
    - a. The worship at their Temple had degenerated into mere religious formality.
    - b. Jeremiah warned the people against their superstitious faith in the Temple and told them that they had turned from God. (Jeremiah 7:1-16)
  - 5. They resisted God and His truth. (7:51-53)
    - a. This is the climax of Stephen's speech.
    - b. By the time Jesus came to earth, the truth of God had become so encrusted with tradition that the people could not recognize Him when He arrived.

### IV. Stephen, The Martyrdom. (Acts 7:54-60)

- A. When the Jews allowed Herod to kill John, they sinned against God, the Father, who had sent him. (Matthew 21:28-32)
- B. When the Jews asked Pilate to crucify Jesus, they sinned against God, the Son. (Matthew 21:33-46)
- C. When the Jews stoned Stephen, they sinned against God, the Holy Spirit. (7:51, Matthew 10:1-8)

**Conclusion:** Stephen was a perfect example of a man full of faith and power, used by God.

**PHILIP (DEACON)**

**Text:** Acts 6:5a

**Introduction:** Philip, one of the seven men chosen to serve the early church as a deacon, was not content just to serve tables. He loved to preach the Word, and is most noted in his revival work. He was not a man to act on his own authority, but was a God-sent and Spirit-controlled evangelist. When the Spirit said, **“Go,”** he obeyed with briskness.

- I. Philip, The Layman. (Acts 6:1-4)
  - A. Little is written in Scripture about his background or family.
  - B. Acts 21:9 tells us that he had **“four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.”**
    1. Though Luke does not tell us much about the use of their gifts, it should be noted that women in the early church were also gifted in ministry.
    2. Philip had also faithfully rooted his family in the things of God. (Ephesians 6:4)
- II. Philip, The Deacon. (Acts 6:5)
  - A. The Scriptural account of his selection gives us the qualities of the seven selected.
    1. **“Of honest report.”**
      - a. A deacon’s character is to be proven and beyond reproach.
      - b. He is to be a man of integrity, faithfulness, trustworthiness, moral excellence, uprightness, and trusted by all.
      - c. In writing to Timothy, Paul adds, **“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless”** (I Timothy 3:8-10).
      - d. Note: a deacon must **“first be proved”** of these characteristic before becoming a deacon, not after assuming the office.
    2. **“Full of the Holy Ghost.”**
      - a. A deacon must be a man filled with **“the fruit of the Spirit.”** (Galatians 5:22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”**)
      - b. Paul instructed the Ephesians, **“be filled with the Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18b).
    3. **“Full of . . . wisdom.”**
      - a. A deacon must have the ability to discern and make sound judgments. (James 3:17, **“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”**)
      - b. A contemporary phrase might be, *“Having common sense.”*
      - c. Improper handling of a bad situation by unwise men might simply add fuel to an already roaring fire.

- III. Philip, The Evangelist. (Acts 8:5)
- A. God directed him to evangelize in Samaria, an area that had been prohibited to the Apostles (Matthew 10:5-6), but was now ready for an evangelistic thrust.
    1. Both John the Baptist and Jesus had ministered there. (John 3:23, 4:1-4)
    2. In his efforts, Philip entered into both of their labors. (Cp. I Corinthians 3:6-7)
  - B. This first major evangelical thrust outside of Jerusalem was carried out by Philip.
    1. The first time the term “**evangelist**” is used, it is used of this layman. (Acts 21:8)
    2. Philip preached “**Christ.**”
  - C. Philip’s most noted conversion was that of the Ethiopian Eunuch. (Acts 8:26-40)
    1. Philip arose. (8:26-27a)
      - a. God confronted Philip in such a way that Philip knew exactly what God’s will was.
      - b. There was a particular individual God wanted to reach.
      - c. Philip responded with immediate obedience to the call.
    2. What Philip found. (8:27b-28)
      - a. Philip found a foreigner riding in a chariot departing from Jerusalem.
      - b. As a “**eunuch of great authority,**” he probably served in a capacity, not unlike a Secretary of State or Secretary of Treasurer.
    3. What Philip sensed. (8:29)
      - a. Philip sensed the impulse of the Holy Spirit to approach this particular man.
      - b. Undoubtedly, he further sensed this man’s need of Christ.
    4. What Philip did. (8:30-34)
      - a. Philip engaged the eunuch in conversation. (Romans 10:17)
      - b. He noted where the man was in his spiritual journey.
        - (1) He was a worshiper of God.
        - (2) He was a reader of God’s Word. (I Corinthians 2:14)
      - c. The man was reading Isaiah 53:7-8, which is a prediction of the coming Messiah.
        - (1) He read of His death: “**He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.**”
        - (2) He read of His willingness to die: “**He opened not his mouth.**”
        - (3) He read of His humiliation in death: “**His judgment [justice due Him] was taken away**”
        - (4) He read of generations of followers: “**who shall declare His generation**” [*of followers yet to come?*]”
      - d. The man just did not understand what he was reading.
    5. What Philip proclaimed. (8:35)
      - a. Philip preached Jesus.
      - b. He took up right where the eunuch was and preached the death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ.
    6. What Philip saw. (8:36-38)
      - a. The eunuch responded by faith, desiring to be baptized.
      - b. Philip responded by clarifying that salvation and baptism are two different things, with the one being the prerequisite to the other.
      - c. Having boldly expressed his faith, the eunuch was baptized.
    7. What Philip experienced – the continued leadership of the Holy Spirit. (8:39-40)

**Conclusion:** God can use any person who yields his life and will to Him.

## BARNABAS

**Text:** Acts 4:36-37

**Introduction:** Joses, whom the Apostles called “**Barnabas**,” was known as the “*Son of Encouragement*.” As a Levite, he emerges as a pivotal character in the Book of Acts and exemplifies the Christian virtues of generosity, leadership, and reconciliation. He was a landowner from the island of Cyprus who would have been considered rich and influential in his days. His contributions were not limited, though, to the financial support of the Apostles, but extended to his pivotal role in nurturing the emerging church and championing the inclusion of Gentiles into its fold.

- I. His Great Generosity. (Acts 4:32-37)
  - A. The life of the early church was “**of one heart and of one soul**,” exuding a spirit of unity.
    1. There was not “**any among them that lacked**” the necessities of life.
    2. This was possible because of the stewardship of those who were “**possessors of lands and houses**.”
  - B. Barnabas was one who exemplified this behavior.
    1. His generosity toward the spreading of the Gospel speaks of his character.
    2. He was willing to give all that he had to help the Gospel ministry. (II Cor. 8:5)
- II. His Great Acceptance. (Acts 9:26-29)
  - A. After Saul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-9), the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid to receive Saul/Paul into the fellowship of believers.
    1. Saul’s past as a arch-persecutor haunted him, yet he was befriended by Barnabas who became thoroughly convinced of Saul’s new faith.
    2. Barnabas was the only one who believed Saul’s testimony of salvation on the Damascus Road, and, as an encourager, pleaded Saul’s case before the others.
  - B. Barnabas, the encourager, then took Saul before “**the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus**” (9:27).
    1. What a blessing he must have been to the new believer!
    2. Such encouragers, who will put their arms around new Christians and help them in their new journey, are still needed today.
- III. His Great Exhortation. (Acts 11:19-23)
  - A. The scene now moves to Antioch, Syria, where many Jewish believers had settled and preached Jesus to the Jews (11:19), because of Stephen’s martyrdom in Jerusalem.
    1. The city was, however, primarily Gentile, and many from the surrounding Greek regions were preaching the Gospel to the “**Grecians**” (11:20)
    2. So powerful was the response of the Gospel in Antioch, that the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to examine what was happening (11:21-22).
  - B. Barnabas’ ministry was exhortation. (11:23)

1. The Greek word “*exhort*” [PAREKALEI] is closely associated with the Greek word for “*Holy Spirit*” [PARACLETE], suggesting that the Spirit’s presence and power within genuine believer is for the purpose of urging, comforting, helping, and warning believers to **“cleave unto the Lord.”**
2. The focus of Barnabas’ exhortation was to challenge, encourage, and warn believers to **“cleave unto the Lord.”**

IV. His Great Ministry. (Acts 11:24-30)

- A. Three **“graces”** given to Barnabas give key to his insight and wisdom. (11:24)
  1. He was a **“Good Man.”**
  2. He was **“Full of the Holy Ghost.”**
  3. He was a man of **“Faith.”**
- B. Barnabas was so spiritually attuned to the workings of the Holy Spirit in Antioch that he knew he needed help.
  1. He knew that the only man equal to the great challenge was Saul/Paul. (11:25)
  2. He journeyed to Tarsus, about 130 miles away, to find him.
  3. Together, they spent about a year teaching and preaching Jesus.
- C. Notice that **“the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”** (11:26b).

V. His Great Calling. (Acts 13:1-3)

- A. The Antioch church was God’s choice to become the mission and evangelistic center of the world.
  1. God was now ready to send His Word to the whole world. (Acts 1:8c)
  2. The disciples had already witnessed in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 8:1), and now it was time to go **“unto the uttermost parts of the earth”** (Acts 1:8c).
- B. The call came upon Barnabas and Saul, who had already been active in the Lord’s service.
  1. It was not the church that set Barnabas and Saul apart **“for the work,”** but God’s Spirit.
  2. The church recognized and confirmed their calling.
  3. Note especially Acts 13:44-52.

VI. His Great Contention. (Acts 15:36-41)

- A. Saul/Paul proposed a Second Missionary journey in Acts 15:36.
  1. Barnabas wanted to again take John Mark along, who had earlier abandoned the team during their First Missionary journey. (15:37-38)
  2. Paul did not like John Mark’s instability and refused to take him along.
- B. The contention was so great that Barnabas and Paul parted company. (15:39-41)
  1. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.
  2. Paul selected Silas and journeyed **“through Syria and Cilicia.”**
- C. By his defense of Saul/Paul before others, he first brought encouragement to him, and again he brought encouragement to John Mark, giving him a second chance.

**Conclusion:** Ever the encourager, Barnabas was generous when the Lord’s work needed to go forward. He offered his heart and hand to one that was *“rightfully”* hated. In him was found Christianity in action. He possessed the qualities of a true Christian gentleman. He turned the tide in favor of those most likely not to succeed – both Paul and John Mark.

## PAUL

**Text:** Acts 8:1-3

**Introduction:** To paint a full portrait of the Apostle Paul would require a large canvas. The greatest of Christians, the profoundest of teachers, the staunchest of friends, the fearless of adventurers, and the dauntless of sufferers – so is Paul of Tarsus, the soldier, the slave and the lover of Jesus Christ our Lord. His many crises, quick decisions, and narrow escapes make his career one of the greatest adventure stories of all time.

- I. A Man Of Tarsus. (Acts 9:11)
  - A. The history of the Church proves that in a time of crisis God knows where to find the man He needs as His weapon of warfare.
  - B. Paul's background is easily gathered from the Acts, and from his own epistles.
    1. A Jew of Tarsus, **“a city in Cilicia.”** (Acts 21:39)
    2. A free-born Roman citizen. (Acts 22:28)
    3. **“Of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.”** (Philippians 3:5)
    4. A student of Gamaliel, **“and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and . . . zealous toward God.”** (Acts 22:3, cp. Galatians 1:14)
    5. A student of both Jewish and Greek literature. (Acts 17:28, Titus 1:12)
    6. A man whose name was changed from Saul to Paul. (Acts 13:9)
- II. A Persecutor Of the Church. (Acts 8:1-3)
  - A. The facts of the Pharisees' outbursts against the early Christians are well known.
    1. Their claims regarding Jesus on the part of a few **“unlearned”** (Acts 4:13) peasants of Galilee were contrary to the Jewish teaching that Paul had received.
    2. This *“new”* teaching threatened the essential features of Judaism, as the Pharisees understood them, and therefore needed to be exterminated. (Acts 26:9-11)
    3. Blinded by his prejudice, Paul surmised it to be the will of God for him to oppose, by whatever means available, this new movement. (Acts 8:3)
  - B. Saul is first mentioned as a young man consenting to the martyrdom of Stephen, at whose feet many witnesses laid their garments. (Acts 7:58-60, 22:20)
    1. It is probable that Saul was one of those from the **“synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and . . . of Cilicia”** (his birthplace), who disputed with Stephen (Acts 6:8-10), and who joined in the decision to stone him.
    2. This arch persecutor of the saints showed no mercy as he hunted believers out. (Acts 9:1-2)
- III. A Convert Of Christ. (Acts 9:1-9)
  - A. The cause of Christianity never looked darker than at the start of Saul's expedition to Damascus.
    1. Though Saul reached Damascus, his documents from the religious authorities in Jerusalem to arrest all the followers of the Nazarene were never used.

2. His persecuting errand suddenly stopped, for on the way to Damascus a miracle happened to this saint-hater and bloodthirsty blasphemer. (I Timothy 1:15)
- B. As soon as Saul was miraculously converted he was immediately ordained of the Lord and instructed by Him.
1. Paul became a chosen vessel to bear Jesus' name before the Jews, and more particularly before the Gentiles. (Acts 9:10-18, esp. verse 15)
  2. He continued his labor for about thirty years, until A.D. 66, when tradition tells us he was beheaded by order of Nero at Rome.
- IV. A Missionary To The Gentiles. (Galatians 2:8-9)
- A. The two dominant personalities in the Book of Acts are Peter and Paul
1. Peter was prominent as "*the Apostle to the Jews.*" (Acts 1-12)
  2. Paul becomes prominent as "*the Apostle to the Gentiles.*" (Acts 13-28)
- B. Paul, as a Hebrew, had such a passion to win his own kinsmen for Christ (Romans 10:1), that once they rejected his witness, a break came when he said to Barnabas, "**Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.**" (Acts 13:46)
1. Paul is an example of the self-denial and devotion found in all soul-winners. (Romans 1:14-16)
  2. By life, labor, teaching, and example, Paul laid down the principles of fruitful missionary service. (I Corinthians 9:19-23a)
- C. In 10 years, Paul covered more than 8,100 miles on three missionary journeys. (II Corinthians 11:23-28)
1. First missionary journey. (Acts 13:1-14:28)
  2. Second missionary journey. (Acts 15:36-18:22)
  3. Third missionary journey. (Acts 18:23-21:16)
- V. A Prisoner Of The Lord. (Philemon 1:1, 9)
- A. One particular aspect of Paul's suffering for the Master was his prison experiences.
1. In his unconverted days, when he made "**havock of the church,**" and forced his way even into the homes of saints, he took and committed them to prison.
  2. Though he came to reap what he had sown, he never thought of himself as a prisoner of any earthly authority, but always as "**a prisoner of Jesus Christ.**"
- B. Toward the close of His ministry, Jesus asked His disciples: "**Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?**" (Matthew 20:22)
1. Paul was not among the Apostles who heard that question, yet he became the finest embodiment of that self-sacrificial discipleship which the cup of baptism symbolized.
  2. So completely did he become identified with Christ, and share in His sufferings, that from the moment of his conversion to the moment of his death, he found life and liberty in being "*the slave of Christ.*" (Philippians 1:1, 1:21, 3:10)
  3. Question: "*Am I ready to make my life an argument for the faith that I profess?*" (Philippians 3:14-16)

**CONCLUSION:** How many are the lessons we can learn from this warrior who fought such a good fight for the Captain of his salvation! To Timothy he wrote, "**I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith**" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

## JOHN MARK

**Text:** Acts 12:24-25

**Introduction:** Mark appears in the New Testament only in association with more prominent personalities and events. An occasional associate of Peter and Paul, his lasting impact on the Christian faith may come more from his writing rather than his life. Although not one of the original disciples of Jesus' earthly ministry, he was present at the birth of something the world had never seen – the Church of Jesus Christ.

- I. Mark's Home Life.
  - A. Mark's mother, Mary, was an influential woman in Jerusalem. (Acts 12:12-13)
    1. She was probably a widow, for her husband is never mentioned.
      - a. She was apparently wealthy and the owner of considerable property with a large enough house for believers to hold prayer meetings in.
      - b. She also had a doorkeeper at the gate to greet guests who entered her home.
    2. Mary was the aunt to Barnabas, making him and Mark cousins. (Colossians 4:10)
  - B. Luke twice speaks of "**John, whose surname was Mark.**" (Acts 12:12, 25)
    1. In his salutation to the Colossians, Paul calls him "**Marcus.**" (Colossians 4:10)
    2. John Mark is first spoken of at home, following the miraculous release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:4-10), after which Peter was denied entry by "**Rhoda**" into Mary's house "**where many were gathered together praying.**" (Acts 12:11-15)
    3. Following Peter's "**continued knocking,**" he was finally allowed to enter and share "**how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.**" (Acts 12:17)
  - C. Later, Peter affectionately refers to him as "**my son.**" (I Peter 5:13)
    1. With this it has been suggested that Peter was the one who lead Mark to the Lord.
    2. Imagine Mark's reaction to the sights and sounds under his mother's roof!
- II. Mark's Early Endeavors.
  - A. Barnabas and Saul (Paul) first took Mark with them as they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch on a famine-relief visit. (Acts 11:27-30, 12:25)
    1. Shortly thereafter, Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey as far as Perga, Pamphylia. (Acts 13:13)
    2. On that journey Mark served as "**their minister,**" or "*assistant*" (Acts 13:5), which probably involved him making arrangements for travel, food, and lodging, as well as having possibly done some teaching.
  - B. At Pamphylia, Mark deserted the team for some undisclosed reason. (Acts 13:13)
    1. A rift eventually developed between Barnabas and Paul over Mark.
    2. On a second journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark to revisit the "**brethren in every city where [they had] preached the word of the Lord.**" (Acts 15:36)
    3. Paul felt Mark should stay behind because he had abandoned them earlier.
    4. Paul and Barnabas ended up going their separate ways, with Barnabas taking Mark to evangelize his homeland, Cyprus, and Paul traveling with Silas overland to Syria and Cilicia. (Acts 15:37-41)

### III. Mark's Favorable Return.

- A. Mark is not heard from again until some twelve years later.
  - 1. What happened to Mark during those intermediary years is unknown.
  - 2. Interestingly enough, it is Paul who first speaks of him in favorable terms.
  - 3. Paul asks the Colossians to **“receive”** Mark should he arrive there (Col. 4:10), no longer as an *“assistant,”* but as one of his **“fellow laborers”** (Philemon 24).
  - 4. During his imprisonment in Rome, Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome, **“for he is [now] profitable to me for the ministry.”** (II Timothy 4:11)
- B. Thus, Mark appears to be reconciled to Paul by the time of the apostle's martyrdom, and continued to labor with Peter.

### IV. Mark's Everlasting Gospel.

- A. Church history suggests that after Peter's death, Mark wanted to record everything that the apostle had taught.
  - 1. Papias (A.D. 70-155), a pupil of the Apostle John, wrote, *“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he remembered – not, however, in order – of the Words and Deeds of Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor was he a follower of His, but later on, as it said, he attached himself to Peter . . . but not teach as though he were composing a connected account of the Lord's Oracles; so that Mark made no mistake in thus writing down some things as he remembered them.”*
  - 2. Mark's Gospel is the first written account admissible as evidence from an eyewitness (Peter) who was there when Jesus served, suffered, lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven.
- B. Mark's Gospel certainly fits such a scenario. (Mark 1:1)
  - 1. It is short, muscular, and to the point – an approach that echoed the attitude of Roman culture.
  - 2. The Roman church consisted mostly of Gentiles, so there was no need for Mark to invest a lot of words explaining Jewish traditions, or proving the Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament.
  - 3. Missing from Mark are the discourses in Matthew, the details in Luke, and the proofs of divinity in John.
  - 4. He focuses less on Jesus' lengthy teachings and more on His actions, structuring his Gospel around Jesus' travels, which culminated in Jerusalem with His crucifixion and resurrection.
- C. Mark presents Jesus as God's Servant. (Mark 10:45)
  - 1. The Servant tested and triumphant over Satan. (1:1-14, esp. 1:13-14)
  - 2. The Servant teaching and touching the needy. (1:14-9:1, esp. 1:28)
  - 3. The Servant treading the path to the tomb. (9:2-14:72, esp. 9:9)
  - 4. The Servant giving His life as a ransom for many. (15:1-47, esp. 15:15)
  - 5. The Servant's ransom accepted by God. (16:1-20, esp. 16:19)

**Conclusion:** Though early on he might be classified by some as a *“spiritual failure,”* through the faithful spiritual encouragement and investments of Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, Mark came to conclude his writing with the simplest statement of Christ's Great Commission: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

## LUKE

**Text:** Colossians 4:14a

**Introduction:** We know less about Luke than any of the other New Testament writers. Nothing is written of his parents nor of his home life. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are commonly ascribed to his penmanship. Paul identifies him as a “**fellow laborer**” in Philemon 24. During Paul’s final imprisonment, Luke’s faithfulness was recorded by the apostle when he declared, “**only Luke is with me**” (II Timothy 4:11).

I. Luke, The Man.

- A. Although little is written directly about Luke, some of his life and personality can be pieced together with the aid of his writings.
  - 1. Tradition records, with uncertainty, that he possibly came from Antioch in Syria, because Antioch played such a significant role in the early Gentile mission which Luke described. (Acts 11, 13-15, 18)
  - 2. Being a Gentile, Luke was the only non-Jewish author of a New Testament book.
- B. Luke was a physician. (Colossians 4:14)
  - 1. As a physician, Luke would have been noted for his detailed historical accounts.
  - 2. He was with Paul when he wrote to the Colossian church.
- C. Luke displayed humility, with no desire to “*sound his own horn.*”
  - 1. More than one-fourth of the New Testament comes from his pen, yet not once does he mention himself by name.
  - 2. He had a great command of the Greek language and was more broad-minded than any other New Testament writer.

II. Luke, The Companion.

- A. Luke accompanied Paul on parts of his second, third, and final missionary journeys.
  - 1. In three places in Acts, the narrative changes from “**they**” to “**we.**”
  - 2. This indicates that Luke became personally present during each of those episodes.
- B. Consider:
  - 1. On Paul’s second journey (A.D. 49-53), Luke accompanied him on a short journey from Troas to Philippi. (Acts 16:10-17, cp. 16:6, 10)
  - 2. On Paul’s third journey (A.D. 54-58), Luke was present with him on his voyage from Philippi to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:5-21:18, cp. 20:4-6)
    - a. Once in Palestine, Luke probably remained close to Paul during his two-year imprisonment in Caesarea.
    - b. It was during this time that Luke probably drew together material, both oral and written, which he later used in writing of his Gospel. (Luke 1:1-4)
  - 3. The third group of “**we**” passages is found repeatedly throughout Paul’s shipwrecked voyage to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. (Acts 27:1-28:16)
- C. Luke was with Paul when he penned his last words from the Mamertine Prison. (II Timothy 4:11)

### III. Luke, The Writer.

- A. Luke is the author of both the *“Gospel of Luke”* and *“The Acts of the Apostles.”*
  1. His purposes for writing. (Luke 1:1-4)
    - a. **“Many have taken in hand,”** or *“many have written.”*
    - b. **“To set forth in order a declaration”** as a systematic writing.
    - c. **“Those things which are most surely believed among us,”** speaking of the Gospel narrative.
    - d. **“They delivered . . . unto us”** those writings or beliefs as told and shared.
    - e. **“Which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word,”** as first-person testimonials.
    - f. **“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,”** adding to the first-person accounts.
    - g. **“That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”** (II Timothy 3:16)
  2. In his prologue to the book of Acts, Luke refers to **“the former treatise have I made . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach”** (Acts 1:1), referring to his gospel.
- B. In his Gospel, Luke presents Christ as **“the Son of man”** (Luke 19:10).
  1. The history of the gospel is traced from its beginnings in the life of Jesus to the founding of the early Church.
  2. As a serious historian, Luke places Jesus within the context of world history.
  3. Of the 23 parables Luke records, 18 of them are unique to his writing.
- C. The one historical book of the New Testament, Acts, traces the development of the early church following the Ascension of Christ.
  1. The Book of Acts stands as a bridge between the life of the Lord Jesus and the ministry of the apostle Paul.
  2. The history and facts written by Luke have no formal ending for the story continues on to this day.
  3. Jesus continues His work from glory as He presides over us in teaching and preaching His Word.
- D. Luke possessed a great command of the Old Testament.
  1. Luke 1:31 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14.
  2. Luke 1:32 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6-7.
  3. Luke 2:4 is a fulfillment of Micah 5:2.
  4. Luke 4:18 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2a.
  5. Acts 2:17-18 is a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-29.
  6. Acts 2:19-20 is a fulfillment of Joel 2:30-31.
  7. Acts 4:11 is a fulfillment of Psalm 118:22.
  8. Acts 7 is a recap of the whole history of Israel from Abraham to Stephen.
  9. Acts 8:32 speaks of the power of Isaiah 53:7-8 to save the Ethiopian eunuch.
  10. In Acts 13:16-41, Paul uses Israel’s past history to point the Jews to Christ, and then turns to the Gentiles in verses 42-43, making the Old Testament the text for his sermon.

**Conclusion:** Luke, as a student of the Scriptures, sought to display the Son of Man in all His glory. Every indwelt believer ought to do the same.

## TIMOTHY

**Text:** Acts 16:1

**Introduction:** Timothy (“**Timotheus**”) was the son of a Christian Jewess named Eunice, and an unknown Greek father, was raised in Lystra. His father probably passed away when he was very young. Besides his mother, his grandmother, Lois, is mentioned, both bringing a strong Christian influence over the young disciple. Later, he became a trusted associate and key companion to the Apostle Paul, playing a significant role in the early Church. Paul viewed him as a protégé in ministry, emphasizing both his mentorship and succession in ministry. Their relationship spanned over two decades, highlighting both professional teamwork and personal bonds.

### I. Timothy’s Life.

#### A. Paul called him, “**my own son in the faith**” (I Timothy 1:2).

1. His mother and grandmother played critical roles in his early Christian upbringing. (II Timothy 1:5)
  - a. Timothy had been instructed in the sacred writings of the Old Testament from his childhood. (II Timothy 3:15)
  - b. When Paul met him, he had already possessed a strong Christian testimony. (Acts 16:2)
2. Being partially Greek, Timothy had probably been well educated in Greek ways and customs.
  - a. Being part Jew, Paul had him circumcised. (Acts 16:3)
  - b. Timothy’s case was different from that of Titus, who was fully Gentile, whom Paul later refused to have circumcised. (Galatians 2:3-4)
3. Timothy was Paul’s junior by several years. (I Timothy 4:12)
  - a. He was naturally shy and timid. (II Timothy 1:6-8)
  - b. He faced frequent ailments. (I Timothy 5:23)
4. So strong was Timothy’s testimony that Paul arranged for him to become a missionary partner on his second journey.
  - a. In contrast to John Mark’s earlier departure from the apostle (Acts 13:13), Timothy was willing to join Paul on his dangerous journeys, travel on difficult errands, and remain Christ’s faithful servant to the very end.
  - b. Paul knew he could count on Timothy. (I Corinthians 15:58)
  - c. His relationship with Paul remained an enduring one. (II Timothy 4:9, 21)
5. He is mentioned as a joint-writer of six of Paul’s epistles. (II Cor. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:1, I Thess. 1:1, II Thess. 1:1, Philemon 1)

#### B. Timothy’s maturity and importance are seen in Acts 16 when Luke’s usage of the word “**he**” (Paul), in verse 1, is changed to “**they**” (Paul and Timothy) in verse 4.

1. He became so highly esteemed and loved by Paul that the apostle spoke of him as being “**likeminded**” (or, “*having a oneness of mind*”) with him. (Phil. 2:19-20)
2. Some commentaries speak of him as being chosen by Paul to be his successor. (Philippians 1:1)

## II. Timothy's Journeys.

- A. From the time of his recruitment, Timothy either ministered with Paul or was sent out by Paul to minister to other churches.
  - 1. I Timothy 4:14 speaks of him being set apart, or *ordained*, " with the **"laying on of the hands of the presbytery,"** to the Gospel ministry.
  - 2. Among his many gifts, his evangelism is primarily noted. (II Timothy 4:5)
- B. Timothy accompanied and represented Paul in his work. (Acts 17:14)
  - 1. In Acts 16:4-5, Timothy left Lystra to accompany Paul and Silas through Galatia on their way to Berea.
  - 2. Having departed from the others in Berea, Paul sent word to Silas and Timothy for them to join him in Athens. (Acts 17:14-15)
  - 3. Timothy and Silas then rejoined Paul in Corinth. (Acts 18:5)
  - 4. From Athens, Timothy was sent to Macedonia to help the believers there whose hearts were ripe for the gospel message of liberty and love. (Acts 19:22)
  - 5. Next destination was Ephesus.
  - 6. During Paul's three year minister in Ephesus, Timothy was sent back to Corinth to handle some problems that had arisen in that church. (I Corinthians 4:17)
  - 7. Timothy is then mentioned as one in a group who escorted Paul on his final return to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:4)
- C. Timothy was in Rome with Paul during his first imprisonment. (Colossians 1:1)
  - 1. It must be remembered that Paul penned Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon from a Roman prison. (Eph. 3:1, Phil. 1:7, Col. 4:10, Phile. 9)
  - 2. The letters written to the Philippians (1:1), the Colossians (1:1), and Philemon (1:1) all mention Timothy alongside of Paul.

## III. Timothy, Receiver Of Two Epistles.

- A. Timothy was serving the church at Ephesus when Paul wrote his first epistle to him. (I Timothy 1:1-2)
  - 1. His purpose in writing was for Timothy to **"charge some that they teach no other doctrine"** (I Timothy 1:3).
  - 2. False teaching had seeped into the assembly's midst.
    - a. Paul counseled Timothy about false teachers, gave instructions concerning true worship, and outlined the qualifications for church officers.
    - b. Timothy's task was one of great responsibility for one still so young.
  - 3. Paul's advice to his young associate was, **"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"** (I Timothy 4:12).
    - a. Opposition to youth can be overcome by the display of Christian maturity – **"Be thou an example of the believers."**
    - b. The call was for Timothy to live an exemplary life.
- B. A second, personal letter to Timothy was written from Rome, just before Paul's death. (II Timothy 1:2, **"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son . . ."**)

**Conclusion:** Every child should be taught the Word of God from an early age. And every child of God should respond with dedicated service to the Lord, wherever it might lead. God always works through people. Timothy is a servant of the Lord, as well as Paul, which speaks to young people and adults alike. Thank God for his life and humble ministry.

## TITUS

**Text:** Titus 1:1-4

**Introduction:** Titus was a Greek convert, friend, and helper of the Apostle Paul. After his conversion he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem, where Paul rejected the demand of the Judaists that Titus be circumcised. Hence, Titus became a person of significance for the principle of Gentile-admission to the Church solely on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ.

### I. Titus, The Person.

- A. Titus was one of at least two younger men that Paul disciplined.
  - 1. He described him, in Titus 1:4, as **“mine own son after the common faith.”**
  - 2. Joining with the other, Timothy, both served as Paul’s messengers and traveling companions.
  - 3. They both went on to lead churches.
  - 4. Paul not only mentored them, but he also advised them in their next steps.
- B. Titus’ background is not explained, other than the fact that he was Gentile and never circumcised. (Galatians 2:3-5)
  - 1. Paul chose to circumcise Timothy out of respect for the Jews in an area they would be ministering in. (Acts 16:1-5)
  - 2. Paul repeatedly mentions in his letters that circumcision is not necessary under the New Covenant, and even tells Titus to silence Christians who try to promote it. (Titus 1:10-14)
  - 3. Paul’s choice to circumcise Timothy had a practical side to it – to reach the lost.
  - 4. He did not require his associates to be circumcised, but if the situation called for working among Jews and it made things easier, he would concede to it.
- C. Titus worked among churches in Gentile areas, including Crete (Titus 1:5), Corinth (II Corinthians 8:6), and Dalmatia (II Timothy 4:10).

### II. Titus, His Journeys.

- A. Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem where they attended the Jerusalem Council which debated whether Christians ought to be circumcised. (Galatians 2:1, Acts 15:1-29)
  - 1. Since Titus was an uncircumcised Gentile (Galatians 2:3), his presence with Paul cut to the heart of the discussion.
  - 2. Ultimately, the Council determined that Christians need not to be circumcised, but laid out some basic values that all Christians should follow. (Acts 15:19-20)
- B. Titus next appears in connection with Paul’s mission to Corinth.
  - 1. While Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he received disturbing news from the church at Corinth. (I Corinthians 1-6)
  - 2. After writing two letters of rebuke and paying a visit to Corinth, Paul sent Titus there with a third letter. (II Corinthians 7:6-9)
- C. When Titus failed to return with news of the Corinthian situation, Paul left Ephesus and, with a troubled spirit (II Corinthians 7:5), traveled to Troas (II Cor. 2:12-13).

1. Finally, in Macedonia, Titus met the anxious apostle with the good news that the church at Corinth had repented. (II Corinthians 7:8-9)
  2. In relief and joy, Paul wrote another letter to Corinth (II Corinthians), sending it to them by Titus. (II Corinthians 7:12-16)
- D. Titus next appears on the island of Crete. (Titus 1:4-5)
1. Crete was one of the most difficult mission fields in the ancient world.
    - a. Crete's people had one of the worst reputations imaginable. (Titus 1:12)
    - b. Cretians were famed as drunkards, shameful, untrustworthy, lying, and gluttonous people.
  2. Beset by a rise in false teaching and declining morality, Titus was told to **"set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city,"** or strengthen the churches by teaching sound doctrine and good works, and appointing elders in every city. (Titus 1:5)
  3. Paul then urged Titus to join him in Nicopolis (on the west coast of Greece) for winter. (Titus 3:12)
- E. II Timothy 4, which Paul wrote shortly before he died as his final message to Timothy, mentions that Titus had gone to the Roman province of Dalmatia (modern day Yugoslavia). (II Timothy 4:10)
1. What happened to Titus after that is uncertain.
  2. Dalmatia would later become the birthplace of Diocletian, a Roman emperor known for persecuting Christians.
  3. Given the fact of the martyrdom of so many early Christians, tradition suggests that Titus may have died there.

### III. Titus, His Two-Fold Mission. (Titus 1:5)

- A. To **"set in order the things that are wanting."**
1. The need of every church is to **"set in order"** the things that are defective and left incomplete. (I Corinthians 14:33)
  2. Every church still has a long way to go before it reaches the full stature of what it should be before the Lord. (Ephesians 4:13)
  3. Tragically, too many churches have two serious defects and flaws:
    - a. They are not adequately organized for ministry.
    - b. They have allowed false teaching in their ranks.
  4. As a result, they are not reaching people for Christ and, in some cases, they are facing terrible division and splits and destruction of their testimony.
  5. The second part of Titus' ministry is an outgrowth of the first.
- B. To **"ordain elders in every city."**
1. Four terms are often used interchangeably for the minister of the church.
    - a. **"Elder"** = speaks of a man's spiritual maturity. (I Peter 5:1)
    - b. **"Bishop"** = speaks of a man's function as **"overseer."** (Titus 1:5-7)
    - c. **"Presbytery"** = speaks of a man's spiritual authority. (I Timothy 4:14)
    - d. **"Pastor"** = speaks of a man's service as under-shepherd. (Ephesians 4:11)
  2. No church, no matter how small, should remain without a pastor for too long.

**Conclusion:** Possessing both strength and tact, Paul used Titus to calm many desperate situations. Therefore, he becomes a good model for Christians who are called to live out their faith in trying circumstances.

## JAMES (JESUS' HALF-BROTHER)

**Text:** Matthew 13:53-56a

**Introduction:** James is mentioned as the oldest brother of Jesus' four younger brothers. In the third and fourth centuries, when the "*perpetual virginity of Mary*" gained popularity, there were those who argued that James, along with Jude (Jude 1), were either step-brothers to Jesus by a former marriage of Joseph, or cousins. Both options seem improbable and forced. The New Testament indicates that Mary and Joseph had sons and daughters, with Jesus being a half-brother, and the second oldest born to them was James.

The gospels reveal that Jesus' family adopted a skeptical attitude toward His ministry, but after the crucifixion, James quickly became a believer. Paul indicates in I Corinthians 15:7 that he was a witness to the resurrection of Jesus. In the Book of Acts (cp. Galatians 2:9), he emerges as a leader of the church in Jerusalem. This same James later authored the Epistle of James in the New Testament, referring to himself solely as "**a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**" (James 1:1).

- I. James, His Biography. (James 1:1a)
  - A. James was among the half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus. (Mark 6:3)
    1. Both Matthew and Mark list him first, implying that he was the oldest of Jesus' half-siblings.
    2. As Jesus traveled back to His hometown of Nazareth, as in other places, He taught many things.
      - a. In teaching in His hometown's synagogue, those in attendance "**were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?**" (Matthew 13:54)
      - b. Those assembled doubted His teaching authority as they continued with their question, "**Is not this the carpenter's son?**" before naming, what they believed were, His brothers and then mentioning His sisters.
  - B. Surprisingly, although they grew up with Jesus and observed firsthand His sinless life, His "*brothers and sisters*" did not as yet believe in Him.
    1. John recorded their unbelief in John 7:2-5, "**Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.**"
    2. In their statement, there seems to bear a hint of mockery.
    3. Their unbelief bore the sad testimony to the truth of Jesus' declaration: "**A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house**" (Mark 3:21).
    4. Their unbelief apparently continued throughout Jesus' earthly life and ministry.
- II. James, His Conversion. (I Corinthians 15:1-7, esp. verse 7)

- A. Shortly after Jesus' disciples gathered in Jerusalem, following His resurrection, something remarkable had happened.
  - 1. Acts 1:13 notes that the apostles were there.
  - 2. Acts 1:14 adds, **“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren** [or, *“with his brothers.”*]
- B. What happened that changed Jesus' skeptical and unbelieving brothers into devoted followers?
  - 1. Paul gives the answer in I Corinthians 15:7, **“After that, [Jesus] was seen of James; then of all the apostles.”**
  - 2. As a result of that personal, post-resurrection appearance, James came to the saving faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. Although not an original apostle, James soon became one of the key leaders in the early Church.
  - 1. Because the apostles were frequently away preaching the Gospel message, James eventually became the pre-eminent leader of the church at Jerusalem.
  - 2. To borrow from a contemporary term, he became its *“Head Pastor.”*
  - 3. Following Peter's miraculous release from Herod's jail, Peter ordered the astounded believers to **“shew these things unto James, and to the brethren”** (Acts 12:17), clearly indicating that James had become an important individual in the church.
- D. James presided over the pivotal Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), which had convened to decide the momentous question of whether salvation required obedience to the Mosaic Law, or was by grace alone working through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
  - 1. After much debate, Peter, Paul and Barnabas went on to report to the church God's gracious salvation of many Gentiles through their ministries. (15:6-12)
  - 2. James then reinforced Peter's point, handed down the council's decision (15:12-21), and composed a summary letter to Gentile believers (15:22-29).

### III. James, His Character. (James 1:1b)

- A. In spite of his prominence in the first verse of his epistle, James' humility stands out.
  - 1. He does not describe himself as Mary's son.
  - 2. He does not describe himself as the Lord's brother.
  - 3. He does not refer to himself as the head of the Jerusalem church or council.
  - 4. He does not mention that the resurrected Christ personally appeared to him.
- B. James simply describes himself as **“a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”**
  - 1. Such a **“servant”** is literally *“a bond-servant,”* or slave; a person deprived of all personal freedom.
  - 2. Such a **“servant”** displays absolute obedience and loyalty to his master.
  - 3. By taking the title **“servant,”** James numbered himself among a great host of saints who honored, not who they were, but Whom they served – the Living God.

**Conclusion:** James could have boasted of living with his brother for many years. He could have bragged of playing with Him, eating with Him, working with Him, and even sleeping with Him. He could of spoken of wandering the hillsides with Jesus; maybe they even sat in class together. But when he spoke of his *“Big Brother,”* he humbly acknowledged himself as **“a servant.”** Humility alone became James' privileged claim to *“fame.”*

## JESUS CHRIST

**Text:** II Corinthians 5:21

**Introduction:** It has been estimated that some forty billion people have lived upon this earth since Adam. This vast multitude includes people of many colors who have explored and settled every corner of the earth, spoken hundreds of languages, formulated numerous cultures, and practiced a multitude of languages.

Yet, each one of these people share one vital thing, a purpose in life down here that leads into an eternal destiny afterwards. This fate depends completely upon one's personal relationship to the subject of this study. The key question in life continues to be, **"What think ye of Christ?"** (Matthew 22:42)

- I. His Names.
  - A. There are more than 200 names attributed to Jesus Christ.
  - B. His three most important names:
    1. **"Jesus"** – His personal name, meaning *"Jehovah is Salvation."* (Matthew 1:21)
    2. **"Christ"** – His title, confirming Him as *"the Anointed Messiah."* (Luke 2:11)
    3. **"Lord"** – His position, signifying His sovereignty, majesty, might, and authority. (Romans 10:13)
  
- II. His Pre-Existence. (John 1:1-3)
  - A. Jesus existed before He came in human form as a baby in Bethlehem's manger. (Micah 5:2)
    1. His life did not begin, as does the life of all other persons, at the moment of birth.
    2. He existed in the beginning, not because He had a beginning, but because He is the beginning. (Genesis 1:1, Revelation 22:13)
  - B. Jesus spoke of the glory He shared with His Father **"before the world was."** (Jn. 17:5)
  
- III. His Incarnation. (Luke 2:11, 21)
  - A. The first direct prophecy of Christ's coming is found in Genesis 3:15.
    1. This is the only instance in the Bible where the word **"seed"** is used in a feminine sense, speaking of the exclusive Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. (cp. Isaiah 7:14)
    2. Jesus would become the *"seed of the woman"* Who would crush Satan's head (I John 3:8), all the while having His own feet bruised (Mark 15:25).
  - B. Some purposes for His incarnation. (Luke 4:18-19)
    1. **"To preach the gospel to the poor."** (Matthew 5:3)
    2. **"To heal the brokenhearted."** (Isaiah 53:4)
    3. **"To preach deliverance to the captives."** (Ephesians 1:7)
    4. **"To recover the sight to the blind."** (Romans 11:25-26a)
    5. **"To set at liberty them that are bruised."** (Hebrews 2:14-15)
    6. **"To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"** – the age of the Messiah. (II Corinthians 6:2)
    7. **"To seek and to save that which was lost."** (Luke 19:10)

IV. His Life. (Luke 1:1-4)

- A. The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) offer the Presentation of Christ's earthly life.
- B. The fourth Gospel (John) offers an Interpretation of that life.

V. His Death. (Romans 3:23)

- A. Jesus died as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.
  - 1. The Father **“made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Corinthians 5:21).
  - 2. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, **“But he was wounded for OUR transgressions, he was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of OUR peace was upon him; and with his stripes WE are healed. All WE like sheep have gone astray; WE have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of US all”** (Isaiah 53:5-6).
- B. By accepting Christ, and His death on the cross, one is *“saved.”* (I Timothy 1:15)
  - 1. His atonement is *“sufficient”* for all; yet *“efficient”* only for those who believe.
  - 2. He is the Savior of all men *“potentially,”* but only of believers *“effectually.”*

VI. His Resurrection. (I Corinthians 15:3-4)

- A. Christianity is the only religion that bases its claim to acceptance upon the resurrection of its Founder. (Romans 1:4)
- B. The credibility of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?
  - 1. How do you account for His empty tomb? (Matthew 28:6)
  - 2. How do you account for the Christian Church? (Matthew 16:18, cp. Acts 2:41)
  - 3. How do you account for the number of witnesses? (I Corinthians 15:3-8)
  - 4. How do you account for the change lives of the early disciples? (Matthew 26:56, Acts 2:23, 36)

VII. His Ascension. (Acts 1:9)

- A. The Ascension marked the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.
- B. Having been received back into Glory, Jesus' present ministries include:
  - 1. He intercedes on our behalf before the Father. (Romans 8:34)
  - 2. He is our faithful High Priest. (Hebrews 4:14-16)
  - 3. He is calling out a people unto Himself – the Church. (Matt. 16:18, I Peter 2:9)
  - 4. He is preparing to receive His own. (John 14:1-3)

VIII. His Return. (Acts 1:10-11)

- A. The angelic announcement – **“this same Jesus.”**
  - 1. Not some other Jesus, but the **“same,”** literal, physical, resurrected Savior.
  - 2. The Jesus the disciples knew and loved will come again to earth just as He ascended from earth. (Cp. I Thessalonians 4:13-17)
- B. The Return of Jesus Christ will occur in the same manner as Jesus ascended: physically, visibly, and in the clouds. (Matthew 24:29-30)

**Conclusion:** As Man, Jesus Christ identified with all the frailties of humanity by enduring temptation, distress, weakness, pain and sorrow. As God, He alone is without sin. As both, He fully represents both God and Man in redemption. I Timothy 2:5 reminds us, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”**

